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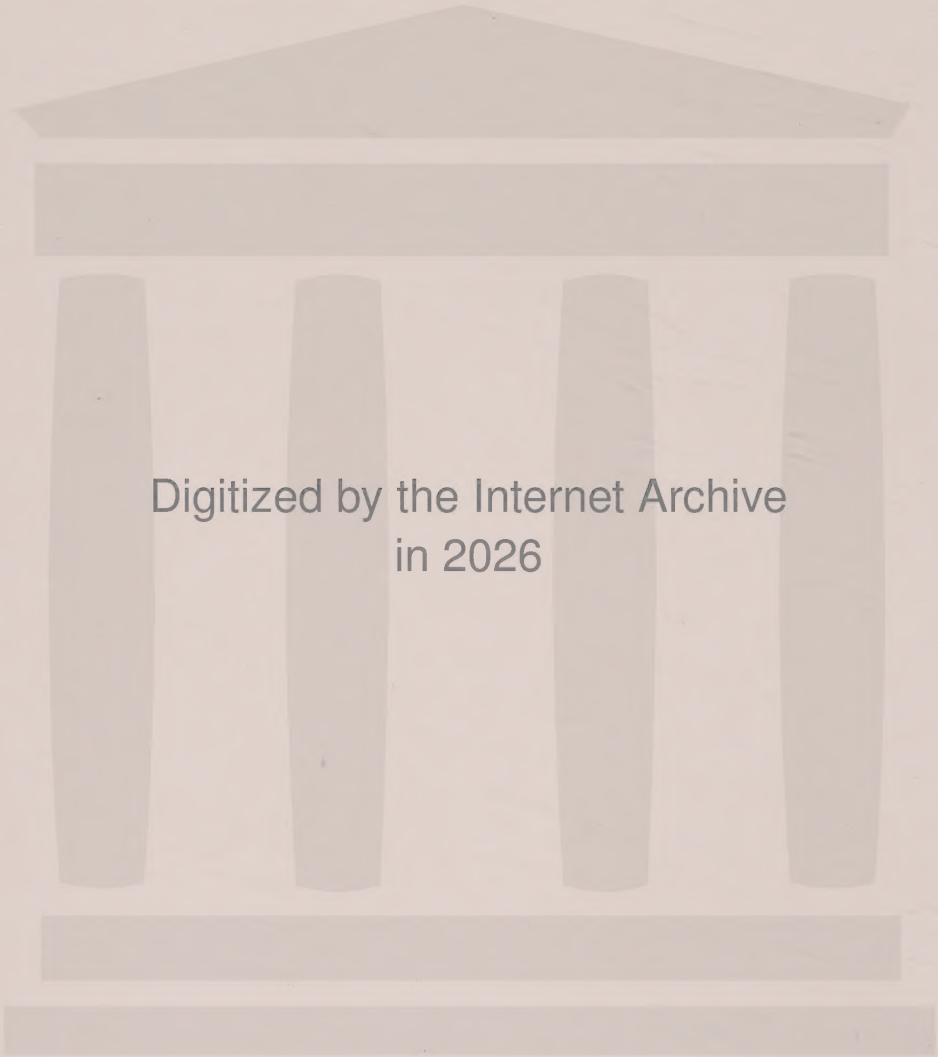

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THE
OLD-WORLD HOUSE

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THE OLD-WORLD HOUSE

ITS FURNITURE & DECORATION

BY

HERBERT CESCINSKY

AUTHOR OF
"ENGLISH FURNITURE OF THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY,"
"EARLY ENGLISH FURNITURE AND WOODWORK,"
"ENGLISH DOMESTIC CLOCKS,"
"CHINESE FURNITURE," ETC., ETC.

VOLUME I

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PREFACE

EVERY hobby begets its own vocabulary, and collecting is no exception to the rule. Thus we find the word "antique" promoted from adjective to noun when applied to furniture and works of art. Presumably, the language we use is ours, for the time being, to do what we like with; but when we employ it as current coin for purposes of exchange of ideas, to pass on to others, we must not complain if confusion arise owing to looseness of meaning or ambiguity of expression. He who writes a book owes it to his readers to define the terms which he intends to use.

I propose to commence with that much-abused word "collector." True, one is a collector if he merely collect, but the name also implies a person who has formed a collection. Of what? There must be an implied limitation, as no one can collect everything. That is just the distinction between the collector and the dustman. One distinguishes, the other does not. Yet, in a general sense, both collect, if it be only rubbish and household refuse. The cynic might retort that in the case of the average furniture collector there is here a distinction without a real difference in many cases, and I have known instances where he would have been right.

It is quite a usual thing to meet one who has furnished his house, in greater part, with examples of English antique furniture, of all periods, who persists in speaking of his "collection." Surely this is a misuse of a term, unless we are using the word in the same sense as the dustman just referred to. One has collected his possessions;

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true, but so has the other. It may be pointed out that the difference is one of value, but I have heard of fortunes found in the dustbin.

As I understand the word, a collection necessarily implies a limitation, more or less. One may be a collector of books, but we look for a statement of his particular sphere, as "penny dreadfuls" may also be included among books. Does he collect bindings, manuscripts, prose, poetry, old books or new books, first editions, books in English or other languages, Grangerised editions, or what? If he reply, merely "books," we begin to wonder what public building he charters to house his collection. The British Museum will be too small.

I am concerned, in this book, with English furniture and examples of art-craftsmanship allied thereto, and in the endeavour to avoid ambiguity, I am at a loss for a word. A house-full of furniture is not a collection without severe limitation, such as one rarely, if ever, finds. We mean an assortment, when we use the term.

I have written this book as a guide for those who desire to furnish their houses with English furniture of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. To go back to the Tudor period is to take the book out of the range of the practical; Tudor furniture does not exist out of museums or collections, using the latter word in its true sense. "Fakes" abound, of course, but I am assuming, for the moment, that our collector desires only genuine pieces.

With this modest idea in mind, I cannot claim that this book will be of value to the advanced collector. In the following pages will be found no "hints" on how to detect forgeries, for instance. Apart, entirely, from the limited scope here available, I would not write such a chapter even if I could, as even if such information could be imparted in the pages of a book (which I deny, as it is analogous to a surgeon attempting to explain an intricate surgical operation for the information of the layman whose only equipment consists in the possession of the usual instruments of the operating theatre) any such hints would be of far greater value to the "faker," and would therefore

be obsolete almost as soon as they were published. Only one unable to differentiate between the genuine and the spurious would venture to write such chapters, on the principle that there is nothing more venturesome than ignorance.

It is customary—or it should be—for an author who writes a book which purports to be a work of reference, to outline briefly, in his preface, not only the field he intends to cover, but also what he proposes to exclude. Every book of this kind should have such a foreword, and the intending purchaser should, as a recognised custom, be permitted to read the preface as a free sample before buying. It ought to be an indictable offence for an author to write, and a publisher to issue, a book with a preface which misleads or promises more than the book performs.

I have attempted here to write a book which, I hope, will be a useful guide to those who desire to furnish their houses with either originals or copies of English antique furniture. I do not admire antiquity merely as such. If a piece possess no other merit than mere age, it falls, in my judgment, into the same category as a derelict dog-kennel; it is time the owner invested in a new one, if only for the sake of the dog. Yet a copy of an art work is not the same thing as the original—that is, if the example can claim real artistic merit—and for much the same reason that a coloured print of a famous picture is not as desirable a possession as the picture itself. The one is a creation, the other is a copy. Something must be allowed for spontaneity, and there is a subtle spirit in an original which the copy always loses.

I have appealed in these pages—I hope not without some success—to home-lovers, to those with a reverence for the work of bygone days, who desire to live with their possessions and to make the most of them; "to trick them out with brave array." The intention is to show what to strive for, and at the same time what to avoid. Some houses are kind to one style or period, some to another. There are

others (and they are not the exception, unfortunately), which are gracious to none. The lover of English antique furniture, if he or she be wise, will pass these houses by, on the other side, like the Pharisee of old, although, I hasten to add, not for the same reason. Let the modern house-furnisher do his best—or his worst—with them; I have no use for the "four-square" room in which the average commercial builder delights, where each side is indexed by its three fellows. There is no greater charm than the unexpected; where the happenings of generations have produced a result, in quaint corner and nook, which the modern builder would not dare to imitate. I offer no criticism of the modern house; "to those who like them, they are just the houses they like," I have no doubt. I have an uncomfortable feeling, however, that many who inhabit them do so for the same reason which guided the immortal Hobson in making his choice.

To state that this book is intended as a guide to the collector of English antique furniture involves an assumption of dignity to which I do not aspire. Collecting, in the true sense of the word—that is, the gathering together of works of art which possess an additional monetary value solely by reason of their rarity—is almost ignored in these pages. I have written no chapters on "fakes" and little about "prices" or any of the other stock paraphernalia which readers of this type of collecting-handbook are supposed to demand. I believe there is a type of collector who knows the price of everything and the value of nothing, but I do not want to make his acquaintance. I could not write an honest chapter on "fakes" and how to detect them, and I have never known an author who could, for reasons which must be obvious. I have known many who have tried, nevertheless. The dealing fraternity who push up prices, and the faker, tread very closely on the heels of the expert or the writer of books on art-work subjects!

Whether this book be really informative or no, I must leave to

the judgment of my readers. I can say that I have tried, honestly, to impart such knowledge as I possess, as the result of some thirty years of practical experience. If I am not equipped, then the years have been sadly wasted. Many of the ideas are, necessarily, the expression of my own individual taste (they could not well be otherwise), and as such, may not be acceptable to others, but in every notion there may be some suggestion; one is not obliged to swallow every idea *en bloc*. Those expressed in these pages may act as a foundation on which others may erect their own superstructure. A sign-post points the way to a place; it does not compel one to go there. It has also been remarked that the sign-post does not go there either!

H. C.

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"Wistaria blossoms trail and fall
Above the length of barrier wall;
And softly, now and then,
The shy, staid-breasted doves will flit
From roof to gateway-top, and sit
And watch the ways of men.'

AUSTIN DOBSON.

THE OLD-WORLD HOUSE

VOLUME I

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTORY: SOMETHING ABOUT THE HOUSE

IF marriages are made in heaven, they are certainly worn on earth, and, as often as not, frayed to pieces in the home. Probably the last thing which the educationalist will learn, or appreciate, is the civilising influence of domestic life, and the part which the home plays in the educational development of a nation. It is possible, of course, that the joy of life or of intellectual recreation may be experienced in a hovel—everything is possible—but it is safer not to risk the happiness of future years by trying the experiment, Diogenes notwithstanding.

What are the amenities of the average middle-class house? Is it a place to live in, and while in it, to be glad to be alive, or is it one to get away from as soon and as rapidly as possible? Let us take the testimony of the average house agent, who, in his own terms, "has inspected the property personally." He ought to know, if anyone does. He begins his description of it, as a rule, by stating that it is only a short distance from a railway station, from whence fast trains are frequent to town and all parts of the country; it is near to trams and omnibuses, possesses a garage in which a car can be housed—to assist in the flight from the personally inspected house. These are the amenities. To say that this is only a portion of the usual description is true, but it is frequently the main, and it is always the first. Is the house livable? Is there a fine old-world atmosphere about it? Will the purchaser feel that once at home he will leave it with regret? The agent is silent on these points, and if he committed himself to

any statement on these important matters, I, for one, would not believe him.

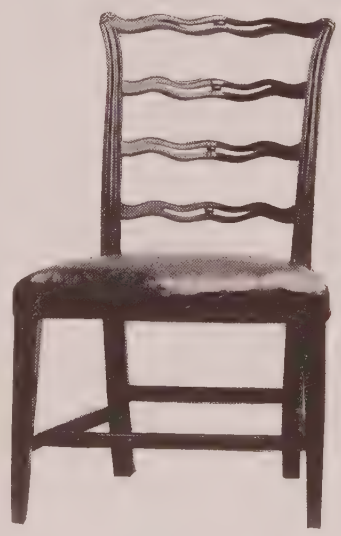
If my lot in life had cast me for the profession of a house agent, I should set forth the charms of the houses I had to sell—that is, if I conscientiously thought they were worth buying and would be a joy to the possessor instead of a necessary nuisance. I should commence the description of my choicest properties with a recommendation that to get away from them was a matter of trouble and time, and I should enlarge on the advantages of this fact, and on the distance from a railway station, and the absence of a stable or a garage.

He who judges quickly, with the usual result attendant on hasty conclusions, might infer, from the foregoing, that the house agent was a pet aversion of mine. On the contrary, he is, and has always been, my best friend, and I know he is not in the habit, as a rule, of taking good-humoured banter as a serious offence, even when stratified with a layer or two of truth. The agent, as a rule, caters for his clients; he would be a fool if he did not. The average man demands accessibility to town—whether London or some other commercial grinding-mill matters not here. The agent tells him, therefore, how easily he can get away from the house which is offered for sale. If the average man were in the habit of wearing a couple of silk hats as footgear, one on each foot, the hatter would expatiate on the wearing qualities of *his* hats. Can you blame him?

I have illustrated, in the next chapter, views of several charming houses—at least, I think they are. My friends the house agents have supplied me with photographs of properties which they have on their books, and I would not willingly bite the feeding hand.

The fault is not in the agent, it is in *you*, my unknown house-hunting friend (my friend, I hope). You do not know what to ask for, and the agent wonders what, in the name of goodness, you want, but is much too polite, as a general rule, to put it thus bluntly, leaving it for me to be rude on his behalf, which I am, gladly, in a spirit of gratitude and friendship.

The making of an interesting home implies two factors, the first of which is generally conceded, the second seldom admitted. These are the knowledge and skill on the part, say, of a decorative expert who is employed to produce a result, and the taste of the owner to appreciate it when made. The expert must be contented either with the approval of the elect or the mob; he cannot have both. To take an example. I have a friend who has eighteen chairs in his dining-room, all of the one kind and period; mahogany Chippendale, ladder-backs, yet no two are exactly alike. To me, the collection is a never-failing source of interest. It possesses that principle of variety which is the basis of all charm in the home. Yet I have heard criticisms levelled at these chairs on this account alone, from persons who must have everything to accord, whose poodle dog must match their socks or neckties in colour. To my mind, there is nothing more execrable, and more fundamentally wrong, than this idea of "matching." I hate the term "suite"; the stock parlance of the furniture salesman. His goods do not sell on their merits, obviously, otherwise there would be no such thing as a good salesman as compared with a bad one. He is there, as a rule, to sell you, not what you want, but something which is "just as good"—as if anything could be "just as good" as the thing which you want. I may mention that those eighteen chairs took a good many years to get together. They were bought in all parts of the country, and at widely varying prices. None were



expensive, as the owner is a man of modest means, who could not afford a fancy price for the "joy" of having all the eighteen of the one pattern.

There are two other points which need emphasising; the first is that tastes vary with different individuals, and that personal predilections may change, in the course of years, with the same person. The expert has the option, therefore, of creating what the client requires—or thinks he does—or to aim at a scheme of decoration and furnishing which may be appreciated later, when the necessary taste has been acquired. I have encountered many, in the course of my business life, who were quite definite in their instructions, and yet were the first to blame the professional man, who had acted upon them, for the result obtained. It was not that the explanation was vague; the necessary knowledge and experience were absent. I am sorry to have to say that the gentle sex is by far the worst offender in this respect, as a rule. There are some exceptions, of course, and of these I can number several who are born creators of the home beautiful, but the average woman—and I say this deliberately—attempts to gloss over an atrociously decorated room, or a spoiled house, by the use of gewgaws. This type is especially prone to accumulate rather than to collect, in much the same way as a magpie does. The favourite term, used *ad nauseam*, is "I picked that up," oblivious of the fact that anyone with the smallest modicum of artistic sense would have let it lie—where it ought to

remain—on the rubbish heap. Such women, as a rule, love a bargain; they simply cannot resist a thing which appears cheap—and usually is, and looks it.

To say that there is a considerable preponderance of mankind to whom an artistic home has no appeal, is to state a regrettable truth. Whether because of inherited or acquired nomadic instincts, or that the pursuit of wealth has left no time nor inclination for more gentle pursuits, or for a hundred other reasons, the fact remains. There is also a considerable minority who have the artistic sense, but not the means; the "champagne appetite with the beer income," as the expressive slang phrase puts it. At the other extreme, while admitting at once that the successful home is often spoiled for want of money—fine things are necessarily expensive, and they can rarely be bought from fools—I have seen many which have been ruined for the opposite reason; too much has been spent upon them. I have known men, with the necessary equipment for making a pretty, modest home, who have expended large sums, and have acquired a grandiose and dismal palace or a miniature museum. There is the other sort, to which I have already alluded in my preface, to whom everything has a price, yet nothing has a true value. This kind is a nuisance to itself, and everybody else, dealers included.

Throughout the following pages I have illustrated examples of English furniture from the one standpoint of beauty of line,

proportion, or design. Whether such furniture be original or "fake" does not trouble me here in any way. I am considering furniture solely from the decorative side, and for this purpose I would sooner have a good copy than a bad original. But such copy *must* be fine; it must not be, as copies usually are, a bad travesty of the kind which is made and sold commercially as a general rule. If there be any merit in the original it is because it is a creation, something upon which the craftsman has expended thought and time, and on which he has exercised an eye trained to appreciate a correct line and a fine proportion. In an obviously lesser degree I demand the same from the copyist, but just because so little is required, that little is almost invariably left out. I have no objection to a copyist altering or modifying his model if the departure be an improvement; in fact, I would applaud such an effort. After all, the dwarf on the shoulders of the giant can see farther than the giant himself. But for the "just as good" or the "that will do" kind of workman I have no manner of use, and should have no mercy. His "improvements" on fine originals are so much mere effrontery; ignorant impertinence such as the musical hack possesses who attempts to rewrite or "improve" Beethoven or Schubert.

I have given, in the succeeding chapters, some brief historical account of the various styles and the well-known craftsmen, as this knowledge is a necessary part, not only of the equipment of the decorator or furnisher, but also, be it noted, of the client, if the latter is to appreciate his possessions. I do not say that all are compelled to like the work of one period, or of any, but I do ask those who may possess latent taste to foster its development. If, finally, it be discovered that they possess none, there is not much harm done. It is better to aim at a home which will be appreciated more and more than to create something which pleases for the moment yet becomes irksome after a while. The

is just the difference between the music of the "popular" writer and the Ninth Symphony, for example. It is also the reason, perhaps, why the cheap ballad sells in its thousands, although infinitely dearer, bulk for bulk, paper for paper, than the works of Bach, Beethoven, or Brahms, while a fine library of classical music *can* be bought for a few pounds, yet rarely is. "Against stupidity the gods war in vain," said Goethe, but only after he had made many attempts and suffered many defeats. *Hinc illæ lacrimæ!*

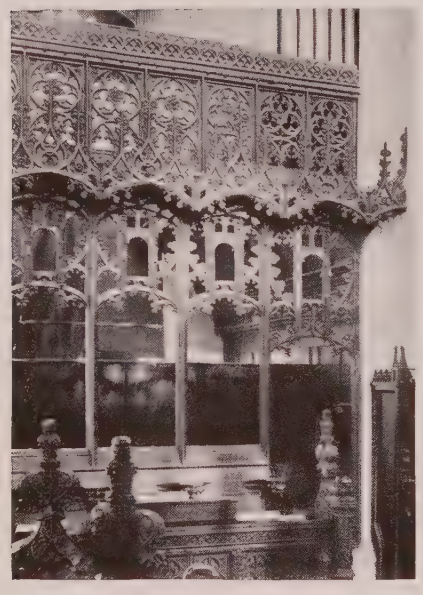
CHAPTER II

THE OLD-WORLD HOUSE

ONE of my privileges is to know an elderly gentlewoman (in the true sense of the word) whose family has owned and lived in the same house for some two hundred and fifty years. Each generation has added something—a wing here, a room there, nothing with any settled plan, considering only the needs of the moment. That great architect, Time, has blended all together, and has surrounded the house with smooth lawns, gracious gardens, and stately trees. There is nothing of lofty dignity anywhere; no room is of greater height than eight or nine feet at the most, yet there is a quiet character, unmistakable yet elusive. The early years of the eighteenth century saw the creation of the long, low drawing-room—or parlour, as its present owner insists—with its simple moulded wainscotting of white painted deal from floor to ceiling; the last years were responsible for the two Adam mantels in the same room, and the two slow-combustion grates of burnished steel date from not long ago. Efficiency counts before pedantry in this house. Each panel of the wainscotting above the dado has its picture, a few of the Cavalier period—Kneller and Lely—the greater number of the schools of Reynolds, Gainsborough, Raeburn, and Hoppner—artificial, perhaps, yet full of charm. The library is older, of late Stuart days, panelled with richly figured oak (which has known neither varnish nor polish, other than friction with wax) where the wall-flanks are not occupied by bookcases (insertions of later date), almost from floor to ceiling, and without doors, as bookcases in the country should be. The books belong, as a rule, to the

Smooth Lawns, Gracious Gardens, and Stately Trees.

days when a volume worth keeping was thought worthy of a good binding of tooled leather. The dining-room—it is called the eating parlour in the old inventories—knows something of Wren, and still more of Chippendale. A house of quiet taste, built for yeomen, and full of that character which change of ownership or the acquirement of great wealth soon dissipates. It is a house to be kind to, in the lady's own words. Whether everyone would like it I cannot say, but, to quote again, it is not the house which likes everyone. In this sense, it has a living entity—perhaps a soul. The old craftsmen believed that the gods were everywhere; true craftsmanship, in this regard, is properly Pagan, deifying the thing produced with cunning of eye and hand, for its own sake. With the whir of machinery, the bustle of modern commercial life, these old gods depart. It is not in crowded cities that real artisanship can live. Only village life, with its true fellowship of craftsmen based on personal knowledge and esteem, when things were wrought for the sheer pleasure of artistic creation, could have produced the fine woodwork of the fifteenth century, which survives to-day only in tiny churches scattered up and down the country, in East Anglia—once rich on the gains of the textile trades with the Low Countries—



"Deifying the Thing Produced with Cunning of Eye and Hand."

in Somerset, Wiltshire, Devon, or the bordering counties of Wales.

* * *

In the same way as to evolve furniture of simple proportion and line, without aid from the carver, the lacquer-worker or the cutter of marquetry, is the supreme test of the craftsman or designer, so to make the most of a modest house is the measure of the capabilities of the decorator. With mansions or palaces the very intricacy and grandiose character of the schemes adopted often cover a multitude of errors of taste, of line, of colour harmony or of proportion. Perhaps that is why so many modern houses are so unsuccessful, so arid, comfortless, and devoid of interest. They ape the palace or the mansion in miniature. A bad choice and arrangement of furniture or absence of harmony in colour schemes may be responsible for a good deal, but many of the modern houses—I speak not of the work of the jerry builder, but of the younger school of architects working without stint of money, in reason—defy the best efforts of the decorator. The scheme of decoration is either too involved or on too settled a plan. The house that has happened, as it were, is so often superior in charm and interest to the one which has been deliberately designed, that something must be said in favour of this "happening." That is where the collector of furniture is advantaged; he does not often buy the thing he wants; more often, he wants the thing he buys. A subtle difference, perhaps, but all-important in its result. We know what modern furniture is like, as a rule; we anticipate each piece before we see it, thanks to the execrable taste for "matching," and the cult, among manufacturers, for the "suite." Yet in the

house furnished haphazard, with the antique or even the second-hand (there is a distinction here), we have the charm of the unexpected everywhere, and that is the principal factor in a successful furnishing scheme.

Modern ideas of comfort, and, what is more important still, of sanitation and cleanliness, with accompanying conveniences of lighting and warming, have rendered a somewhat drastic re-modelling of old houses highly necessary. The work involved can, and should, be done with a reverent regard for the old fabric. Unfortunately, the necessary knowledge and appreciation is, too often, lacking. Houses built in the characteristically English half-timber style, a framework of oak filled with brick or plaster and roofed with red sand-faced tiles, present many difficulties in the way of masking plumbing pipes, hot-water barrel or electrical casings. The average plumber or heating engineer appears to think that service pipes of lead or iron are things of beauty, to be fully displayed, and he is only restrained by forcible means. If old floors cannot be disturbed—and in the case of old oak boards this is often impossible—the best way is to form separate cavity partitions inside the existing walls, with pipes and casings behind, provision being made for the necessary access traps to joints or junction boxes.

I have shown on page 12 a very successful modern house designed in this half-timber style. Examples as good as this are rare, and costly to build. The gardens and general lay-out (houses of this kind demand at least an acre of land, and well-grown timber on the site is a necessity) are matters of time and expense. Yet many old cottages or farmhouses, dating from the seventeenth century, which are adaptable to modern needs, are available if only one is prepared to look for them, and not to trust too much to the house

A House which has "Happened."

agent. Inaccessibility, in these days of the motor-car, no longer exists (if one *must* get away from the house), water can be obtained from a

A Modern Rendering of the Half-Timber Style of the Seventeenth Century.

well and lifted to a roof-tank by a small motor-pump, the same power being used to drive a generator and charge a small lighting plant of from 16 to 50 2-volt cells according to needs. In timber houses, any of the lead-covered twin-wiring systems can be installed without pulling the house about too much, the visible wiring being quite inconspicuous, especially if it be painted in with the woodwork or walls.

Half-timber houses owe a great deal of their charm to the decorative effect of the exterior more than to the rooms inside. They are characteristically English, and properly set among well-grown timber give an attraction to the landscape which is possible with no other style of architecture. This relation of house to site is so often overlooked with new buildings, probably because time alone can harmonise the two, and the modern man is in a hurry. There is nothing more unmistakable, to my mind, than a house which has been owned and cared for, by the same family, for generations. This care does not

consist in frequent painting or renovation of the fabric, or even in preserving the integrity of the house. It may be added to, a wing here, a room there, it may even be neglected somewhat, so long as its personality (for want of a better term) is respected, which, after all, is nothing more than its proper relation to its surroundings. Below is shown a timber and plaster addition to a stone house which is quite successful, owing a good deal to appearance of variety which the mixture of styles gives.

For entrance gates to houses of this kind I prefer a brick-built archway similar to the one shown overleaf, although this degree of elaboration is not necessary to obtain the desired vista effect. The gates —here of wood, but delicately forged iron in scroll pattern looks better still—are hung on heavy hinges to the brick jambs. At Hales Place, in the old-world Kentish town of Tenterden, is a charming example of a Tudor brick-built archway, of which a view is given on the next page.

Half-Timber Addition to a Stone-Built House.

The most livable houses, as a rule, are those which were built in the early years of the eighteenth century, such as the one shown on

Gateway of Brick to a House of Stone.

page 15. Unfortunately, they are seldom of modest size, such as present-day servant problems demand, and more unfortunately still, the Victorian era of "improvement" has rarely left the original work alone. While, in some cases, restoration to the original structure is not difficult, a Victorian architect let loose on roofs, chimneys, doors, and windows, to "improve" them according to the notions of our dingily respectable grandfathers, was a very dreadful person indeed, and one who often left the "mark of the beast" on a house very effectually. Enormous and useless kitchens, grates made to burn coal by the ton, yet to give no heat, massive marble chimney-pieces suggestive of the mausoleum rather than the house, utterly inadequate servant accommodation (maids must have slept three or more in a room in those days; little wonder that the present female generation abhors "service"), insufficiency of bath-rooms (cleanliness was a dubious virtue, not quite compatible with

Hales Place, Tenterden: Tudor Archway of Brick.

strict respectability), window joinery where there was more wood than glass, and, in consequence, every room dark and gloomy,

A Characteristic Early Georgian House.

perfectly horrible doors, architraves, skirting, cornices, and ceilings, and, to crown all, the vilest wall-papers (a wall-paper is an abomination in itself, as a rule) which perverted ingenuity could devise; these are a few of the playful attempts of the Victorian architect and decorator to make this mundane life worth living. He is gone, and, happily, his were also the days when tombstones were made of the largest possible size and weight—to prevent indiscriminate resurrection, maybe.

* * * * *

Considerable license can be taken with the furnishing of half-timber houses; in fact, the whole range, from the Gothic up to Sheraton (not beyond, please, or we will tread on the heels of our happily-buried Victorian), is at command, and, wisely selected, should not look incongruous, even if assorted in the same room. It is obvious that with low rooms any furniture of undue height

is out of place, *unless used for room corners or fireplace recesses.* Thus, a long-case clock, even of room-height, will not appear out of place in a corner, but it will look incongruous anywhere else. (See below for an example of this.)

It is better to keep the limitations of a low room in mind, and to play up to them, as it were. Furniture of not more than dado-height is better here, the wall surface above being broken up by pictures, small mirrors or hanging china plates. The top of chests or tables can be used to stand vases or lamps upon, thereby further breaking up the dado-line.

While purity of style may be a desirable thing (its total absence is execrable, as we know) there *must* be some concessions made in a house of the seventeenth century or earlier, so it is as well to begin at once. There is not sufficient variety in oak furniture of this period to satisfy modern requirements. To attempt a compromise (for example, to make an upholstered easy-chair in the same manner in which an Elizabethan craftsman would have done, if he had thought of it) is bad; it is more truthful to adopt the later styles frankly and strive for the harmonious variety which such admixture of styles encourages. With houses of the Georgian period we are under no such limitations, but an assortment of furniture of walnut, mahogany, satinwood, painted wood, marquetry, or lacquer, gives an opportunity to those with an eye for selection and arrangement which is not to be dispensed with lightly. Get rid, in the first place, of the idea of the "suite" almost entirely; there is nothing more opposed to all harmony in furnishing schemes. Even in the dining-room, where it may be desirable to have the chairs alike—that is, of a set, as distinct from a number of similar, yet not of the same,

Corner Arrangement of Tall Furniture in a Low Room.

pattern—it is not necessary (and with antique furniture it is not possible) to have the sideboard, table, or side tables to match. They need not even be similar; if only of the same wood and, approximately, of the one period, the effect will be one of variety, and in this alone lies the secret of successful furnishing. Avoid monotony like the plague. The "suite" idea has an entire cemetery of homes to its credit, or discredit. You do not have your pictures to match; why your furniture?

1 2

CHAPTER III

THE DECORATION OF ROOMS

I HAVE the idea that I cannot insist too often on the fact that this book is written for the home-lover of modest means. I feel this for two reasons. In the first place the reader may forget it, and wonder at the comparative absence of the elaborate in the schemes and pieces illustrated in these pages. Here is very little decorative woodwork or furniture suitable for the museum or the wealthy collector, although some of the pieces illustrated have been selected, as it happens, from museums. Secondly, I emphasise this point as I find I am in danger, frequently, of forgetting it myself, with the result that the fine *and expensive* thing will creep in, ousting the one which is merely fine. In such matters as mouldings and interior joinery, I console myself with two reflections—namely, that good sections are very little more expensive to make than bad ones (or they should be), and that the extra outlay is initial and is soon forgotten, whereas we may live with bad sections and ill-designed joinery for the rest of our lives, regretting our original parsimony every day. I would like to drive one point home with a hammer: stock joinery is always bad in detail, so bad indeed that one almost suspects it to be purposed. I say nothing of the character of the wood, as a rule, as seasoned timber, in soft woods, is practically unprocurable in these days of kiln-drying. It is better to recognise this at the onset, and to design our joinery in such a manner that shrinkage will not be as serious as it otherwise might be. Thus, the use of wide boards, without jointing, is to be deprecated. In joinery intended for painting I prefer a number of strips, well glued

at the joints, to a wide panel. This may entail more work at the outset, but the extra time and labour is more than compensated for if it save filling, or re-jointing, after a door panel has been fixed in its framing and has shrunk to such a degree that one can post letters through the cracks. There is nothing more annoyingly expensive (vexatious because it is money thrown away, literally) than to repair or restore poor joinery after it has done its worst in the way of warping, shrinking, or cracking.

The importance of mouldings of good sections, and especially of correct proportions, in any room, cannot be overestimated. This is the crucial beginning. It will be found, on careful examination, that in many rooms of the eighteenth century, not in mansions, but in small houses, and even cottages, the charm consists in these details alone. Unfortunately, while it costs no more to "run" a good section than a bad one, there is mass-production to be considered. Stock mouldings, such as are made by the thousands of feet with the one setting up of the machine, are cheaper, considerably, than short lengths made to special sections. The pity is that the firms who make stock mouldings choose the vilest sections, especially for skirtings and door and window architraves, whereas others, copied from fine originals of the Georgian period, would cost no more. The offence is aggravated by the statement, frequently made, and presumably in good faith, that these sections are those which are demanded, because the average builder buys no other. The obvious retort, that there are no others to buy, is ignored. I suppose many people imagine that Hobson really did choose.

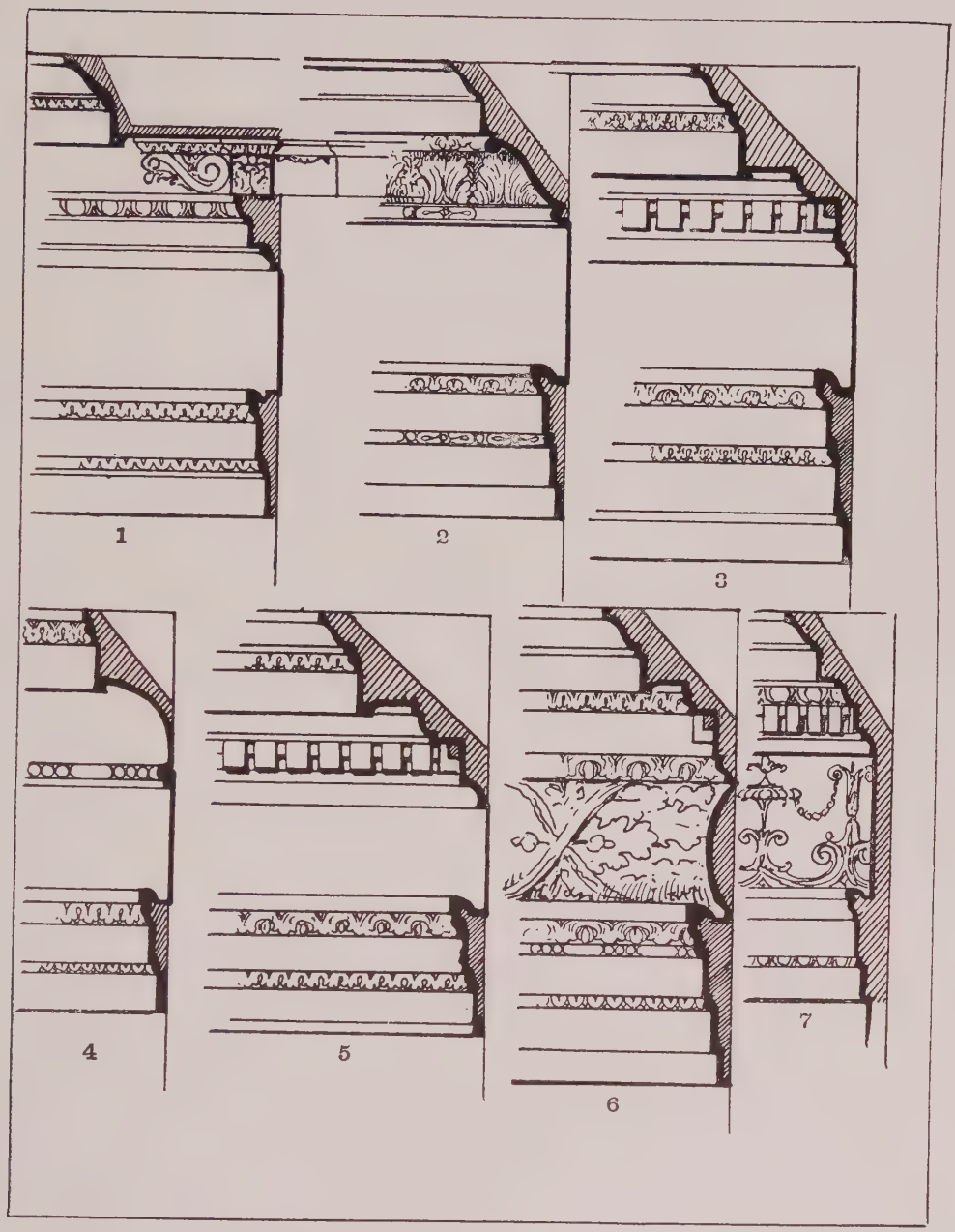
Herbert Spencer remarked, as a curious fact, in his autobiography, that not only do makers of articles, in common demand, choose the rational thing last, but they have a tendency, even when they have hit upon the right (and the same may be said, with even greater force, of the artistic) thing, to forsake it again for the wrong, on the slightest, or on no provocation. What we have to consider here is that makers of commercial joinery have not yet arrived at the stage of producing good sections, so we can defer the problem of keeping them on the right path when they reach it.

Four pages of sections are shown here, for cornices, picture rails, dadoes, skirtings, architraves, and one detail of a typical Georgian six-panelled door. In all cases where embellishments, whether of plaster, composition or carving, are shown, it is understood that these details can, in the greater number of instances, be omitted without marring the effect. It is wise to be very chary of over-elaborating a moulding, especially in a small or low room. Under-ornamentation is rarely a fault; the opposite extreme can be, and often is, a sin against taste.

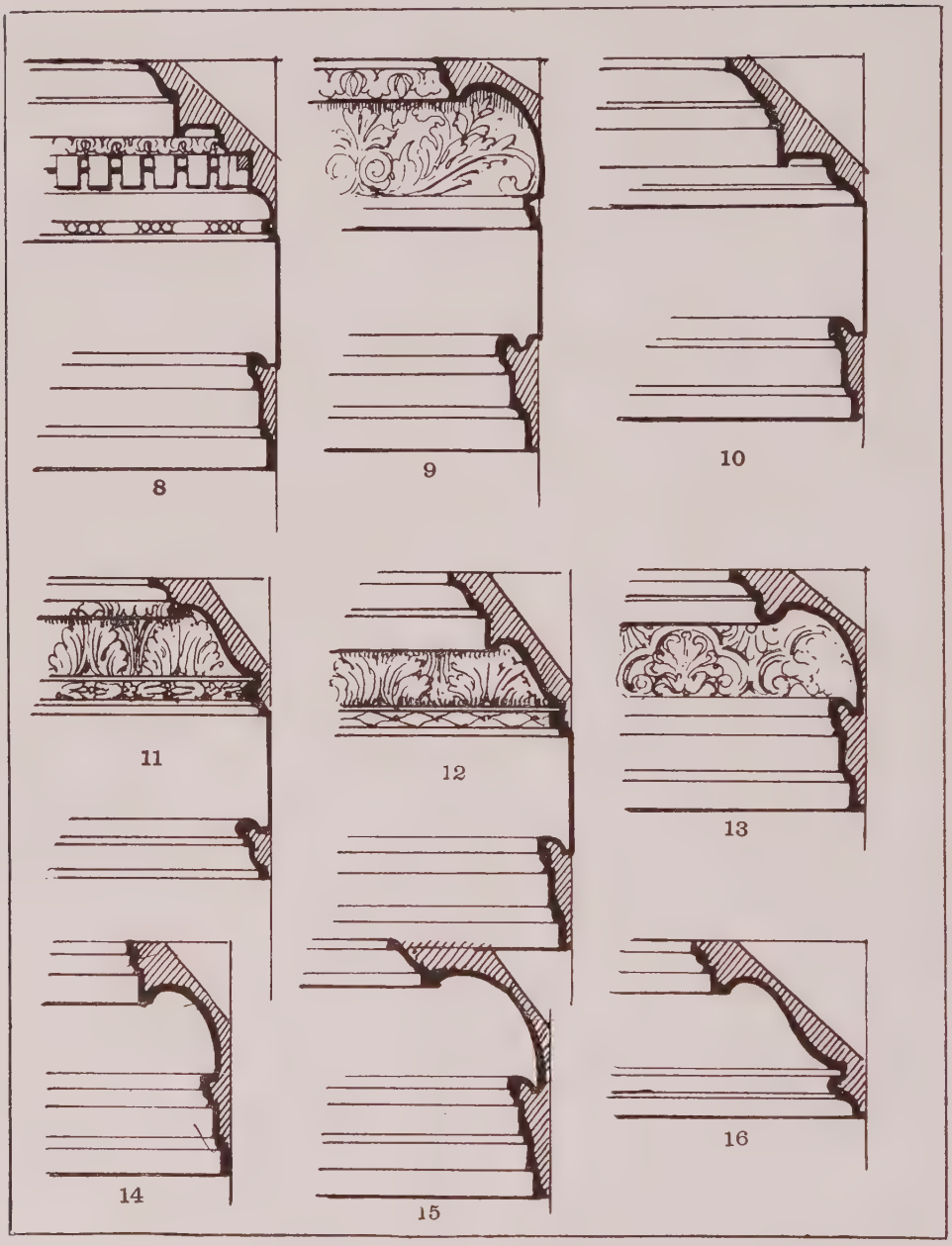
Do not make the almost general mistake of fixing a picture rail so as to leave a broad frieze between it and the cornice. Still more important, do not paint the frieze or picture moulding as a part of the wall; both should be a part of the cornice, in the way in which all the sections are shown here (see page 35). It is difficult to lay down any rule as to proportions, as projections often give an appearance of depth. Thus a modillion cornice, such as No. 1 here, with a depth and projection of 7 inches, will be ample for a room 11 feet high. The frieze should be the same depth as the cornice, and the picture rail about half as much. Do not make the rail skimpy; consider it always as the frieze of an entablature.

The heights of dadoes are also difficult to state by rule of thumb, but it is better to err on the low rather than the high side. One-fourth of the total room-height is a good proportion, with a skirting one-fourth of the total height of the dado. Much depends, of course, upon the sections chosen, and these rules only apply to rooms in the Georgian styles. Do not be afraid of projections, especially in skirtings. As the flat of the skirting can be boxed out, in the manner shown on the sections here, this projection does not mean undue extravagance in timber. Remember, the skirting is the base of the room, and should look adequate to carry the wall-flanks above. A mean skirting is the hall-mark of a bad room, and nearly every stock skirting is a mean one.

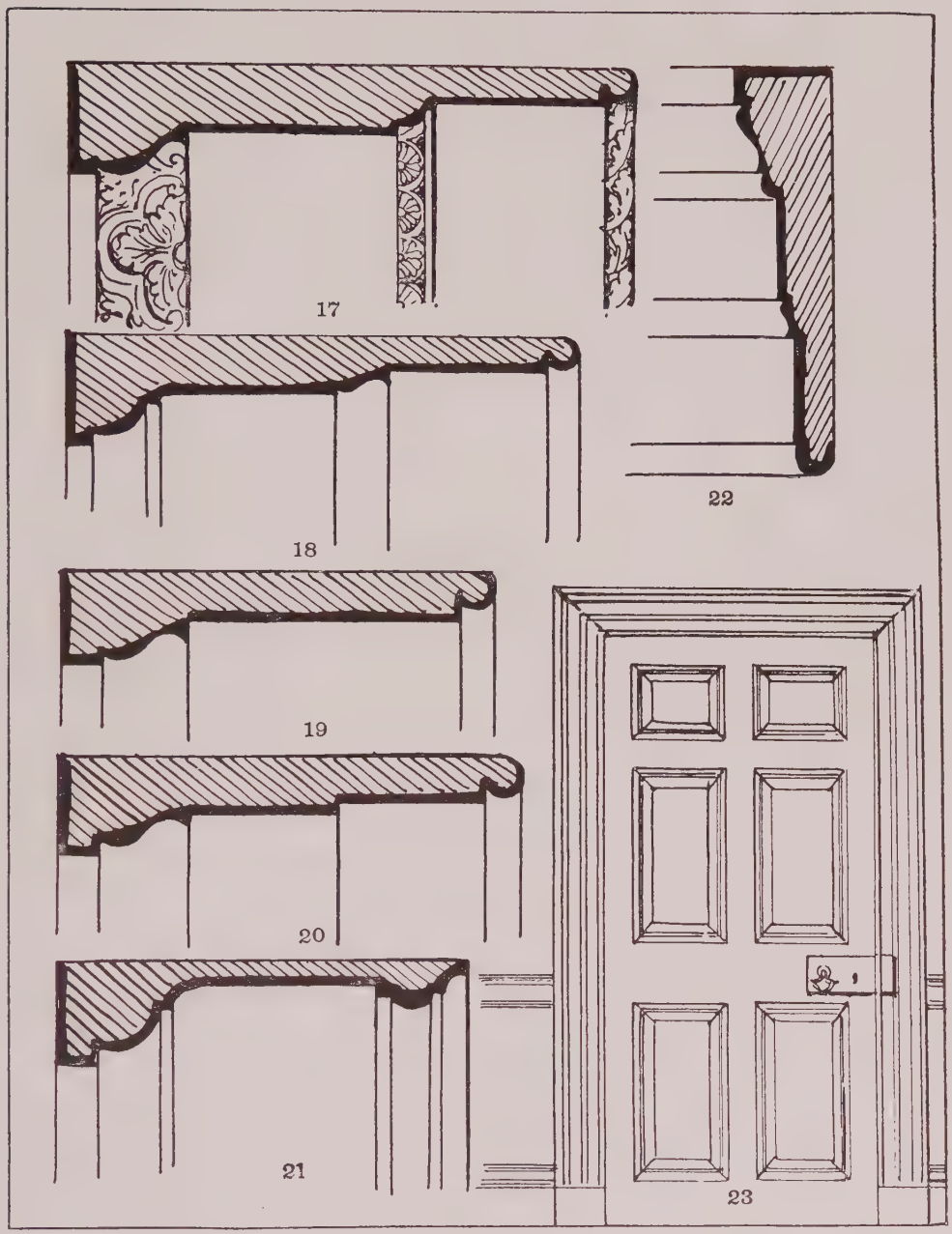
Taking the sections in the order in which they are shown here, Nos. 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, and 7 are suitable for rooms of not less than 11 feet in height; Nos. 2 and 7 could be used in a 10-foot room.



Plaster Cornices : Wood Picture Rails.



Plaster Cornices : Wood Picture Rails.



Architraves, and a Georgian Door.

Surbases and Skirtings.

Nos. 4, 10, 11, and 13 are ideal for heights of 9 feet or less. The cornices proper should be in plaster, (firms like Messrs. Jackson of Rathbone Place, London, W., have good stock moulds of many of these shown here), the picture rails in wood. The friezes are, in each case, the finished face of the plaster of the wall itself. The architraves shown in Nos. 17 to 22 are all suitable for rooms large or small; it is merely a matter of proportions. No. 19 is a good simple section for a cottage or small house.

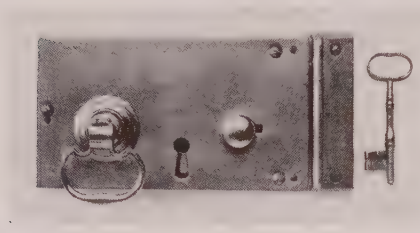
Dadoes and skirtings are self-suggestive, but using terms in their proper significance, the capping moulding is the surbase, the dado itself being the entire base of the room from capping to floor. It is sometimes desirable to frame out below the surbase, with the wall-face forming the panels, as in No. 27. In other cases the surbase can be made with a broad top flat to take panelling above only, as in Nos. 30, 31, and 35. The provision of a low chair rail at the base of the skirting, as in No. 39, is desirable, preventing damage to the skirting by the back legs of chairs being pushed violently against the wall. Simple skirtings of moulded boards, such as No. 32, require no boxing out, but all the others on this page are fixed in this projecting manner. Bold skirting, such as Nos. 24, 25, 26, 27, 33, 35, 36, and 39 are only suitable for large and lofty rooms.

The modern four-panelled Swedish door is an abomination, and should not be tolerated. The six-panelled, such as is illustrated here in No. 23, is almost as cheap to make, and is infinitely preferable in every way. The moulding should be a bold ovolo, worked on the framings, not nailed on the panels.

Door-proportions are important—nothing looks worse than a narrow door. I prefer a height of 6 feet 4 inches, which is admittedly low, with a width of 3 feet, where possible. The architraves should be broad, not less than one-sixth of the door-width, and should have a square stop the height of the flat of the skirting. It is better to project the hinges, for the door to clear this square stop, rather than to chamfer it towards the door.

Timber-thicknesses being reckoned gross—that is, without the saw-cut, which takes away nearly one-eighth of an inch, a door made

from 1½-inch wood would only be 1⅜ inches when finished. This is a thin door, but is ample for a small cottage or house. For a door of this kind, a box-lock, preferably of plain brass, is better than a mortise lock, as the latter weakens the door unduly on its locking rail, and is not so decorative in effect. Never choose an ornamented brass box-lock for the door in a small house; this is embellishment misapplied. It is more important to have the key of good design, such as the example shown by the side of the lock illustrated here. With box-locks, finger plates are impossible things; they are doubtful embellishments on any door. Handles are also important. The usual cheap brass-founder's stock contains nothing but rubbish. China handles are one of the legacies from our grandfathers' days, and should be avoided. A word may be said in favour of those of cut glass, although they date from the same period, as a rule, but they are costly, and liable to breakage. I know of no more suitable handle for Georgian doors than the swivelled-loop kind such as is shown here on this box-lock. They are simple, charming in detail, easy to fix without the use of worm-screws, and they are now stocked by the better brasswork houses. With a box-lock, the screw-plate of the handle must be riveted to the lock face, otherwise it cannot be fixed, and will pull off its square spindle.

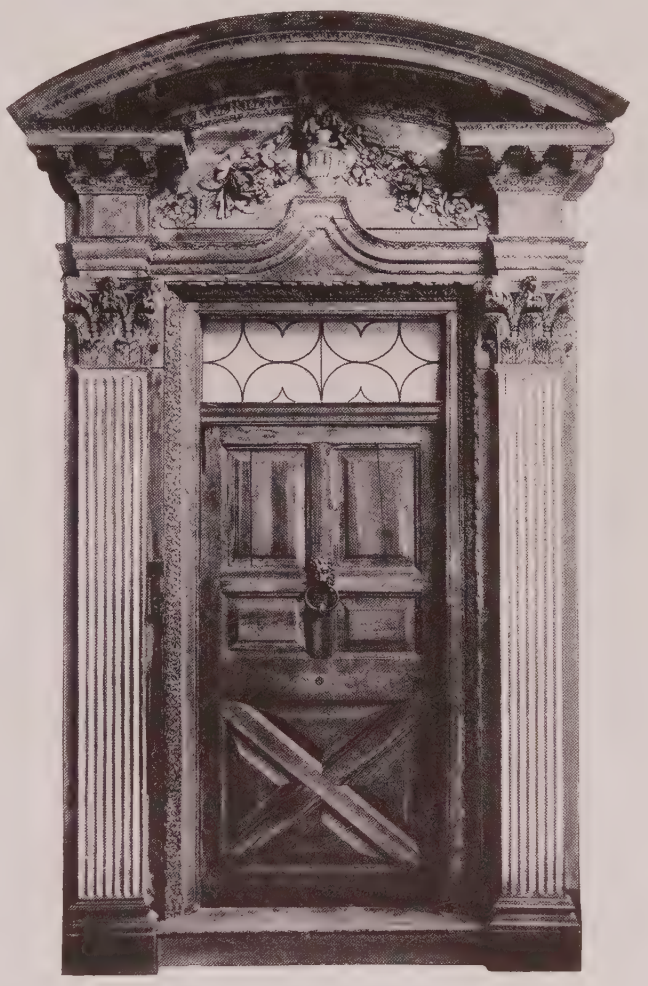


Brass Box-Lock with its Key, Early Eighteenth Century.

Hinges can be dismissed in a few words. If they have to project, in order that the door can clear a projecting stop to the architrave, choose those with ornamental terminals to the "knuckles." Brass is more decorative than iron, and the door and architrave should be painted first, the hinges and other furniture fixed afterwards. This is the cleaner and neater method; that is why it is followed so seldom.

A word or two on the subject of entrance doors to houses—or "street" doors, as they are generally termed, so many of the eighteenth-century houses being built right on the road—may be given here.

Georgian houses atoned for the lack of privacy in the front rooms on the ground-floors, as a rule, by the ornate character of their entrance doors. On these alone a book could be written, and illustrative material is available to fill three or four. Two fine examples are shown here on this page and the next, and as these are now in the Victoria and Albert Museum, they are accessible for inspection and close study, which they will adequately repay.



Doorcase and Door from 18, *Carey Street, London, W.C.*
(*In the Victoria and Albert Museum.*)

Fine as these doors are—and many examples still remain *in situ* in London and old towns such as Hitchin, Canterbury, and St. Albans (to name three, at hazard, from a hundred or two)—they are rare in the generality of houses, and it is seldom that they can be acquired, and still more seldom adapted to a house not especially designed to receive them. They belong as a rule to their structures, and do not bear transplantation.

With this incursion into the elaborate, in spite of the warning with which this chapter opens, I have shown here, on page 29, an

idea which may be of some service. This door was, originally, six-panelled, the upper four panels being glazed. The "cross" of the framing (a glance at the door shown on page 23 will show the meaning of this term) obscured a good deal of the light, and the hall beyond was dark in consequence. To obviate this defect, the cross-framing was cut away (which did not weaken the door), a rebated bolection moulding mitred round the opening thus made, and a leaded glass panel inserted, fixed with flat beads on the hall side. An opportunity was created for incorporating the armorial stained-glass panel shown in the illustration. To the purist this method of gaining additional light would not appeal, stained glass in a Georgian door being an anachronism, but the result was decorative and charming, and, above all, effective for the purpose of lighting the staircase hall.

Doorcase and Door from Abingdon House, Wright's Lane, Kensington. (In the Victoria and Albert Museum.)

Staircases are frequently a serious problem. In designing a house one has the choice of two alternatives: to make the staircase a means of access to the upper floors only, and to give it no other importance—to conceal it, in fact; or to make it a prominent feature, giving it the space which its dignity demands. The first was the usual method in sixteenth-century houses, especially of the Great Hall type, where one or two and often more flights of stairs were provided, but of an inconspicuous type, sometimes deliberately concealed behind doors. With the Great Hall, of full roof-height, bisecting the house, two or more stairways were necessary. It was with the Stuart houses, and with the decline of the Great Hall in favour of the Long Gallery, that the staircase attained its full dignity of broad hand-rail, massive newel—often surmounted with carved heraldic figures of lions or griffins—and pierced panel or turned baluster. Towards the end of the seventeenth century, staircases became lighter in construction without losing much of their earlier dignity, and it is these late seventeenth and early eighteenth-century balusters which are ideal as models, graceful in form, fine in detail, and not too expensive to reproduce. It is of the highest importance,

Door with Centre "Cross" Cut away, and Leaded Glass Panel inserted in Bolection Moulding.

however, that space should not be begrudged. Thus, on this page is a staircase admirable in detail and charming in arrangement of long gallery and cross bridge, yet marred by being in a hall too narrow for it. On the next page is another example, not nearly as good in detail, but great dignity of effect is obtained by the broad panelled hall, through the columned opening in which the staircase is seen in proper perspective. Even in the small house this method is to be recommended. It is better to lose a so-styled drawing-room to gain a good staircase or lounge hall (as the latter can make an ideal sitting-room, especially in the summer) rather than to have the staircase rising abruptly from a narrow passage on which the entrance door of the house opens immediately. There is nothing which stamps many of the smaller Victorian houses as utterly bad so much as these narrow staircase halls or passages leading upwards, steeply, to the floors above, and by a dingy flight, dark and hidden behind a spandrel door, to unspeakable basement kitchen or "servants' quarters."

Oak Staircase with Deal Dado Panelling. The Sweeps of the Hand-Rail are Admirable.

The growth of a class which has learned to detest the name of "service," and to prefer stuffy factories, even in slums, dates from

this Victorian period of innumerable stairs and dark basements.

The grate with its mantel is an important adjunct to the small room, and the more simple the type the better as a rule. Where a mantel shelf is not required, as in a hall, nothing looks better than a simple bolection moulding, framed round marble slips, such as is shown below. Such a moulding should be of marble, but a good substitute can be obtained with either wood or Keene's cement, painted and grained. To the purist an imitation of marble is an offence, I know, but he is not an economical person, as a rule, and I am giving hints to the one whose purse is not long. The mantel shown here begins with two base blocks of dark green Tinos marble. Perhaps marble is an extravagance, but it is desirable to avoid the injury which would result if the ends of the fender were pushed against plaster by careless maids. The moulding itself is cast in Keene's cement, marbled to correspond with the base blocks. The interior—that is, the surround to the anthracite stove—is of Sienna marble, as it has to withstand great heat in the winter.

Panelled Hall open to Staircase Hall beyond. An Ideal Arrangement where Possible. (By Courtesy of Messrs. Daniel Smith, Oakley and Garrard.)

Bolection Moulding of Keene's Cement, Marbled. Base Blocks of Tinos, Surround to Stove Sienna Marble. An Ideal Mantel Treatment for a Hall.

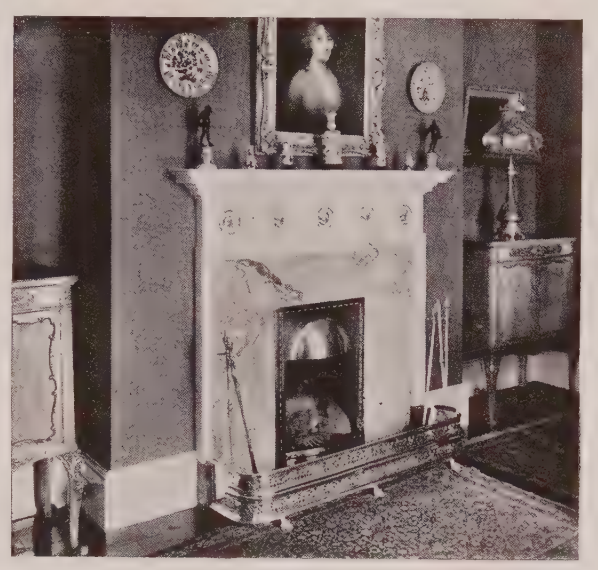
Anthracite stoves are very efficient for a hall of any size, especially when the staircase is in the hall itself, as in this case, but in sitting-rooms they are not to be recommended. They also demand attention and cleanliness which they do not always receive.

Frame Carved in Lime-Tree (the work of Grinling Gibbons), Victoria and Albert Museum.

It may be a matter of personal predilection, but I am very attached to these simple marble bolection surrounds, especially for rooms of 11 feet, or more, in height. They are applicable, of course, only to early Georgian or late Orange schemes. The absence of a mantel shelf is a positive advantage if it prevent a choice assortment of photograph frames and similar knick-knacks being displayed. The space above can be filled with a good oil painting, portrait or landscape, or it can be reserved for an ornate frame, such as the one shown here, which would look over-elaborate if hung elsewhere. This is your focus-point, and here you can "let yourself go."

The modern slow-combustion grate is really a triumph of manufacture, efficient, economical, and decorative. It is also exceedingly cheap. I have illustrated one here, on the next page, of Elsley's make, with a simple mantel. The grate surrounds are of Sienna marble.

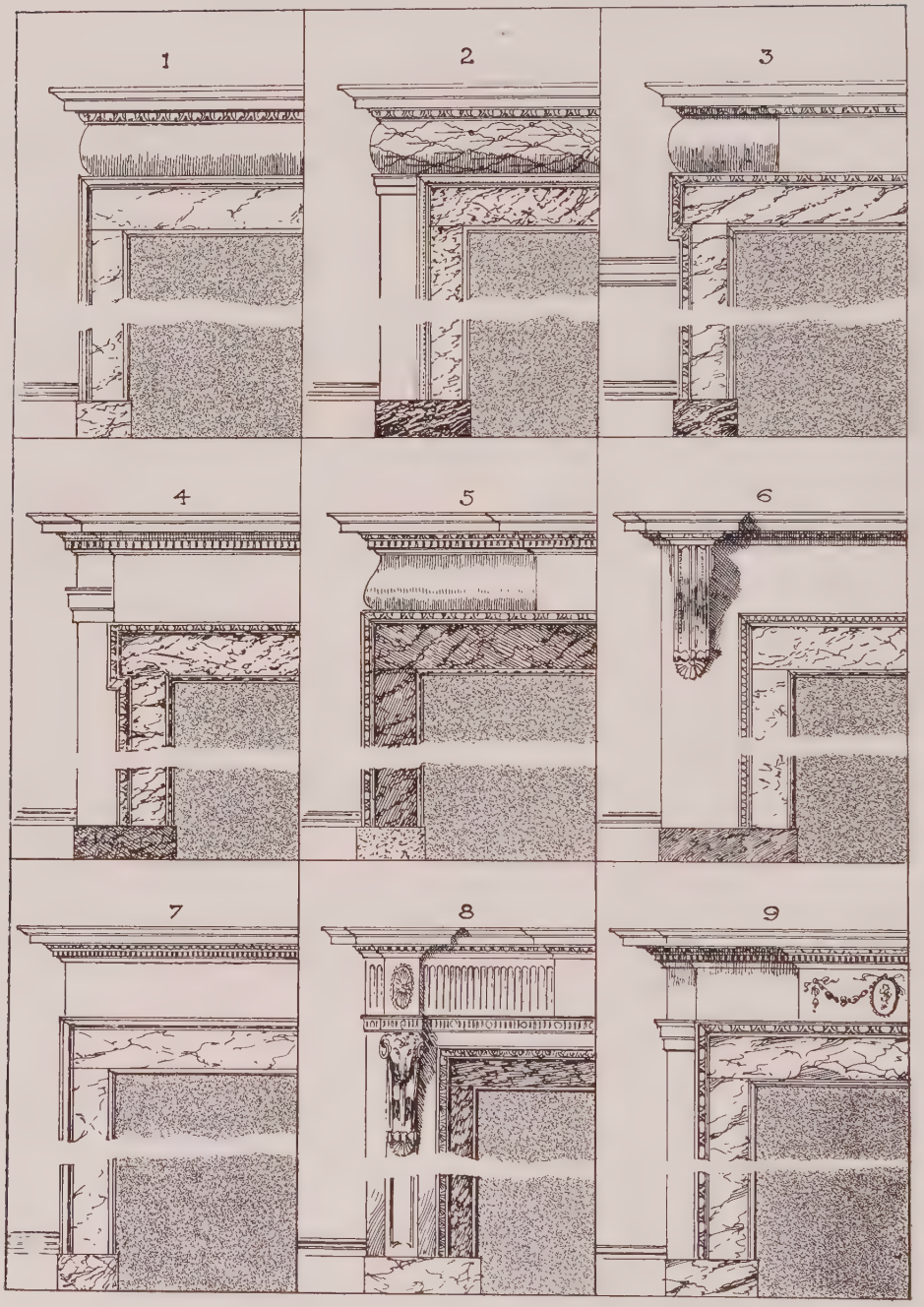
A pretty effect is obtained by inlaying five blue-and-white Chinese plates, of miniature size, in the frieze, fixing them with gold-size and plaster. A good mantelpiece should always be simple; elaboration is undesirable, even though this is the focus-point of the room. The shelf should not have a large projection; if a broad shelf be desired, then the entire mantel should be boxed out from the wall face.



Simple Chimney-Piece of Painted Deal. Frieze Inlaid with Blue-and-White Chinese Plates. Broad Sienna Marble Linings. Steel Grate.

Nine designs of mantels are illustrated here, all simple, with the exception, possibly, of No. 8, which is from an Adam original. I have shown no such thing as an overmantel, as, to me, this article hardly exists outside of a Victorian lodging-house of the lower grade. All the models shown here are intended for painting, and the enrichments can be of carton-pierre—or can be omitted altogether in the greater number of instances. Do not insist on a shelf of too great an overhang. In the small illustration on page 35 the shelf grows, naturally, from its tablet.

So far we have only considered the Georgian house. With the seventeenth-century type, or earlier, the best form is the stone lining, or mantlet, either finished against the plaster, as on page 36, or with an oak surround varying from the simple moulding or shelf up to the lordly panelled room, such as the two elaborate examples shown here, pages 37 and 39. The dining-room mantel at Hemsted is, perhaps, the decorative limit in carved oak, with lining of sculptured stone and



Nine Simple Designs for Chimney-Pieces.

opening decorated with two-inch bricks and roofing tiles on edge, arranged in herring-bone fashion. This is a good method of using up broken sand-faced tiles, which, otherwise, are nearly always discarded as useless.

With an old house, especially of seventeenth-century date, the trouble frequently is that there are too many rooms, generally on the upper floors. Their presence is a responsibility to a careful housewife, who declines to lock a door and to consider the room behind as non-existent. In early Stuart houses, whether of brick, stone or timber, of the low rambling kind, this problem frequently presents itself. The ground-floor rooms are low, but all the more desirable on that account. Thus, on page 39, is a charming morning-room or semi-library less than nine feet in height, yet the low pitch of the ceiling has been taken full advantage of in the arrangement of the room, in a manner which, while quite successful here, would have been an utter failure had the height been increased by another two feet or so. When we have, however, upper rooms of little more than six feet, one feels that the ceiling is being carried on the head of the occupant, and the effect becomes disagreeable. Such a problem actually existed in the same house from which this morning-room has been taken. You cannot raise the roof without unreasonable expense, and the room is not worth it. To lower the

Well-Designed Mantel of Painted Deal. Black Grate, Inner Surrounds of Tinos Marble, Outer of Sicilian. Pierced Brass Fender.

floor is to rob the apartment below, which, being already low, cannot afford it.

I have already insisted, in the previous chapter, on two things in the arrangement of rooms in the house—namely, to aim at variety wherever possible, such as the breaking up of square rooms to an irregular shape, and in making no compromise on the subject of room-height. If you want comfort, and have to consider expense, let your ceilings be low. Every foot you add means another couple of stairs to mount and to keep clean, more stair-carpet, extra rods, greater height to the house, which means more expense in the building, and other things in the way of domestic worries which the careful housewife will appreciate. But if you desire a high room, as a welcome change from the low ceilings elsewhere, let it *be* high, not a matter of a niggardly foot or two, but plunge straightway, for seventeen or eighteen feet. Here is your chance to get rid of that upper useless

Stone Mantel and Shelf, Flush with the Plaster of the Wall and with no Oak Surround or Capping.

room; take up the floor, rip out the joists and throw it into the room below. Look at the room on page 40, which is in the same house

Carved Oak Mantel with Stone Surround to Opening. Plain Panelling of Full Room-Height.

Carved Oak Mantel with Stone Surround to Opening. Inner Frame Panelling with Carved Frieze and Pilasters.

Oak Rooms of the Late Seventeenth Century.

as the one we have just noticed; this was formerly two, one above the other, the gallery beyond the small mullioned window, shown high up at the end, marking the original floor-line. The plaster ceiling, in gabled form, has been contrived to bring down the height, which would, otherwise, have been excessive. For this purpose a barrel ceiling is even better, but is much more expensive. The hood above the mantel will show how necessary it was to bring down the ceiling to meet it in this way. Carried up to the ceiling-flat, it would have been enormous.

To many collectors, the principal charm of Stuart panelling and woodwork is its intimate character, which can be appreciated, but is difficult to define. We feel that this work is the personal expression, not only of the craftsmen who produced it, but also of the people for whose houses it was made. This quality is hardly ever present

Mantel of Carved Oak with Stone Lining and Raised Stone Hearth. Wrought-Iron Basket Grate and Irons, adaptable either for Coal or Log Burning.

in the deal panellings of Georgian times. The latter are fully as decorative—in fact, as effective backgrounds for furniture or pictures

(which should be the proper function of wall panellings), they are even more successful. But we must bear in mind that in the seventeenth century, especially during its first half, pictures were rarities, and furniture was exceedingly scanty in any houses of lesser note than those of the noble or very wealthy. True, in the rich East Anglian counties, the merchants who traded with the Netherlands often lived on a more sumptuous scale even than the nobility, in the sense that their houses, although much smaller, were infinitely more complete and finished, but they were the exception. Take the panelled room from Barnstaple, formerly in the house of a rich merchant in Crock Street in the days when Barnstaple was a seaport and traded extensively with the Americas, but now removed to a house outside the town, and fitted with modern doors, chimney opening, and fireplace furniture. Two views are shown on pages 41 and 42. Pentecost Doddridge

Oak-Panelled Room with Carved Mantel, Stone Surround and Raised Hearth. Wall-Flanks on Either Side of Fireplace fitted with Bookshelves. A Good Treatment for Low Rooms.

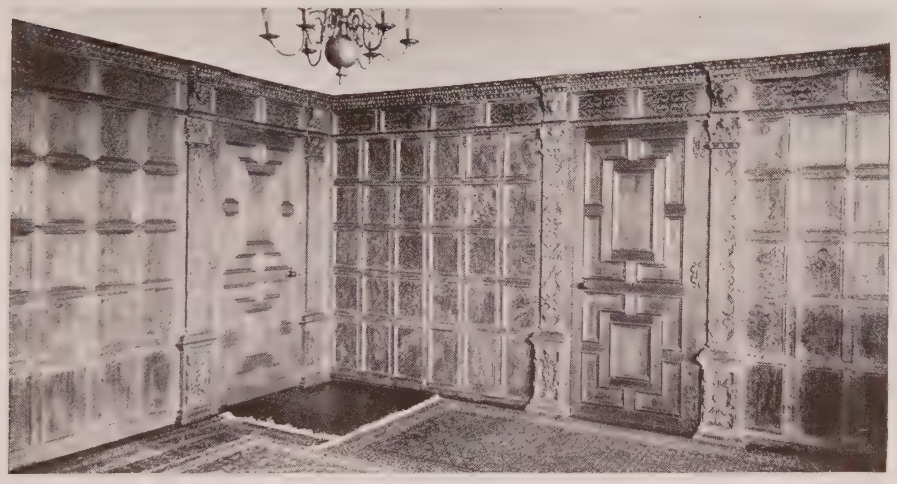
had this fine wainscotting, of richly figured oak, made for his house in 1617, and carved this date in the centre of his mantel with his

initials and those of his wife Elizabeth, P.D. and E.D., to flank it on either side. Here is rich woodwork made for a room which can have boasted little, if anything, in the way of pictures, and the furniture of which must have been scanty; a table, a few chairs, perhaps a buffet or wall cupboard or two, and that was all. Furniture then was made for use, first and foremost. There were no such trifles as "occasional" tables, made not for occasional use, but never to be used at all; merely to occupy floor space and to look pretty. Carpets, we know, were rare, in fact almost unknown. Good oak boards, wide and well figured, secured to the joists below with honest nails driven through and punched home, these were good enough for the feet of the merchant princes of that date, and their womenkind. Here was every opportunity for personal expression in the furnishing and especially the wainscotting of rooms; there was no gewgaw or knick-knack to divert; no artificial dressing up. Fine craftsmanship was fostered, perhaps not by adequate reward, but it is something to the good when the desire can exist to possess a room as rich and as personal as this. The same note is sounded here and there throughout the seventeenth century; it is rarely heard afterwards. Pentecost Doddridge has his room in 1617, from the windows of

Oak Panelling fitted to a High Room, Hooded Mantel of Stone. Gabled Ceiling of Modelled Plaster.

which he can look out on the shipping in the Taw, the argosies bringing wealth from distant lands for the enriching of Barnstaple and its merchants. In years to come, let us hope not in his lifetime, the rivalry between Barnstaple and Bideford is settled, finally, by the shallowing of the river, until vessels of size can no longer reach his town, and its harbour falls into decay. Bideford has triumphed.

At the other end of the century we find another personal expression, when John Penhalow takes a double set of chambers in Clifford's Inn, " for the space of three lives," and puts in the wonderful woodwork which is now one of the finest possessions of the Victoria and Albert Museum. Penhalow looks from *his* windows on the quiet grassed court of the Inn. He is not so far from the Thames (in fact, Clifford's Inn was nearer to it in the late seventeenth century than it is at the present day), and he can gaze upon merchant shipping if he is so inclined, but he is a student, not a trader, yet like to Pentecost of Barnstaple in this, that both left their personality stamped in every



Oak Room from a House in Crock Street, Barnstaple. Made for Pentecost and Elizabeth Doddridge in 1617.

line and detail of the rooms which they enriched for their own delectation, and in which each lived his span of life in quiet enjoyment and content, let us hope.

For a simple scheme, in a long but low room, the large-panelled wainscotting of Georgian time is, perhaps, the most successful. It is considerably cheaper than oak panelling of any quality, other than that

The Chimney-Piece of the Room Illustrated on the Previous Page.

of the tongue-and-groove kind which, some years ago, was made and fixed at a price of about eighteenpence per square foot. Constructionally, however, this was not panelling at all, being put together on the job and nailed to the walls in tiers, much in the same manner as common matchboarding. Made, as it was, from raw American oak, it was, at the best, a poor imitation, and its life but a few years. In this respect it was, perhaps, the most expensive panelling of all, in the long run.

The old Georgian panelling was made, as an almost general rule, of red deal, and very decorative this wood is if the paint be stripped off and the bare surface polished with wax and friction. It is easy for a good decorator to grain over any disfiguring knots or other blemishes. The tone to aim at is that of old pencil cedar or pear-tree, something like a cinnamon shade. This can be achieved by using a coloured wax dissolved to a paste in turpentine, *without heat.*

Room Panelled with Red Deal left in Natural Wood with a Waxed Finish. The Niched Cupboard in the Corner is an Interesting and Inexpensive Feature.

The room shown above is panelled in this way, with a modillion cornice of plaster painted and grained to resemble the wood

Oak China Cupboard with Drawers below. Suitable for Placing against a Wall in the Centre of a Wall-Flank.

below. These old panellings are still to be met with, and are not unreasonably expensive to buy, although the fitting to another room is sometimes a costly matter. Original cornices of wood, with carved modillions (they *were* made) are exceedingly rare, however, and their presence more than doubles the value of a room. In the example shown here the doors are modern, of English oak, with "fielded" or chamfered panels. The apsidal corner niche, open, and with shaped shelves for the display of china, is a pretty and inexpensive feature. On some of the china niches, however, a considerable amount of fine workmanship in the way of carving was frequently lavished. There is a fine example in the Victoria and Albert Museum, which I have illustrated in "Early English Furniture and Woodwork," vol. i., Fig. 285. Among the many fine specimens of eighteenth-century English woodwork which the Museum possesses, this alcove is to me, perhaps, the most satisfying of all.

Above is shown a more simple example of these china cupboards, of oak, and with a glazed latticed door, each shelf with a

pierced and carved bracket at each end. Placed against a wall, in the centre of a flank, these cupboards are exceedingly decorative, especially if they are reserved for the display of really fine English china, Swansea, Devenport, Chelsea, Rockingham, and the like.

The treatment of walls, if panelling be too expensive, is of the highest importance. If it be intended to hang pictures, especially in any number, any pattern on the wall is best avoided. With the pattern goes the necessity of using wall-papers, which are doubtful blessings in many rooms, although possessing decided advantages in large halls or on staircases. I prefer a flat paint, such as Parsons' "Unicote," with a velvet finish, obtained by the use of the stippler, as being more decorative, and infinitely more lasting than any paper. But the decorator who insists on first hanging the walls with a lining paper should be summarily ejected, as on the sticking of his paste (always a dubious proposition) depends the existence of your paint for which you are paying.

If the wall be defective, cut out the bad patches and re-float with Keene's, taking care to apply a thin priming coat just before the plastering sets. "Unicote," being largely prepared with powdered oyster-shells (at least, so I am told), dries without gloss, and with a steel-hard surface which permits of washing and of a certain amount of rough usage. I do not recommend its use on woodwork. For this there is nothing equal to a good lead paint, if properly prepared.

On the subject of the bathroom alone a large book could be written. A progressive range could be illustrated from the Housing Scheme bath, fixed in the scullery, with a portable copper as its next-door neighbour, to the lordly sunk Roman bath, of mosaic or marble. The bathroom is a late arrival in the history of the English house, dating, as a general thing, from the last decade or two of the nineteenth century. True, as early as the "sixties" there were cranks who really believed that washing the body was certainly sanitary, possibly healthy, but the fact that they were regarded *as* cranks shows that the custom was by no means a general one.

In our Old-World House, therefore, the bathroom is either a modern innovation or has to be constructed where nothing of the kind

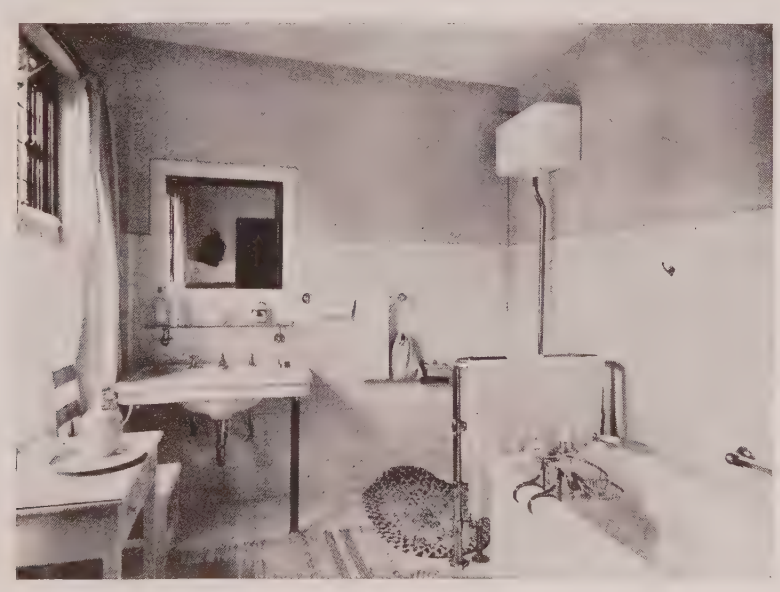
existed before. I have known houses in which the uttermost concession in this direction was a room where a portable bath was placed on the floor, and water carried up in cans for those queer, hardly respectable, people who insisted on washing. No one who has studied the subject of English furniture can have failed to notice the fact that, even at the close of the eighteenth century the washstand or washing table was a non-existent article. Fashion, working in another cycle, and a more hygienic one, has ousted the washstand from many of the modern bedrooms, and rightly too, as the bedroom is not the place to wash in. We know that the bath was unheard of until almost a century later. Can it be that our Georgian ancestors *never* washed? I am afraid it is too true. They powdered, and the gentler, but by no means cleaner, sex rouged, and that sufficed, it seems.

The bath is a problem in the average middle-class house. Mistakes are made, all too frequently, which are not discovered until later on. The bath is selected in a showroom, and fixed and plumbed anyhow, and in any sort of place. Now, in the matter of an efficient bath there is always the tendency to overdo the thing, trusting to eye rather than to experience, finding out, when it is too late, that a similar mistake has been made to that of the boy who helped himself to the salmon; he took what he wanted, and then found out that he did not want all that he took. The average bath is too big, too wide, and too high. It strains the modest resources of the average boiler to fill it sufficiently, and the expanse of radiating surface cools the water too rapidly, with the result that you scald when you enter the water, and you shiver before you leave it. The ideal bath is of copper, either with or without enamelling, but this is expensive. The cast-iron, vitreous-enamelled type is cheap and efficient, providing that it be not too huge. The ideal size is, about 5 feet 6 inches in length, 27 inches in width over the roll, and 15 inches inside depth. The roll of the bath can be quite small and flat. Such a bath should be enamelled outside as well as in, and should stand on a base or plinth, not on feet. In this base can be concealed the fall to the waste end. The taps should be fixed to the wall, in the form of two valves, with a mixing chamber low down in the bath itself.

This obviates the careless practice of running boiling hot water into the bath, and from the height of the tap, with the grave risk of cracking the enamel. A simple rod-waste, with a perforated overflow above, is better than the usual heavy tubular-waste with overflow combined, and the chain-waste is a nuisance. I prefer a bath without any slope of the sides or ends, a plain, vertical-sided tub.

The position of the bath is important. Where possible it should be fixed with its tap and waste end to an outside wall, for convenience of plumbing to taps, waste, and overflow, but otherwise in the centre of the room. The usual custom of fixing it in a corner (unless the bath is to be cased) is insanitary. The space between the side and the wall is a dirt trap, and where you have hot-water pipes you will get dirt, in any household, no matter how clean.

The tiled-in bath is an American notion, developed from the ugly wood-cased baths of the later Victorian days, but without the dis-

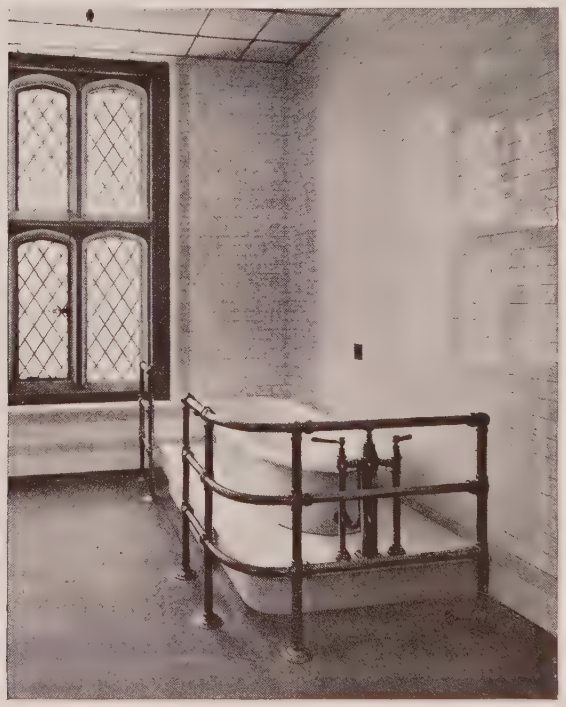


An American Bath, or "Tub," with Sides Tiled in under the Roll. Lavatory Basin with Glass Legs. Tiled Dado to Room and Vitreous Tiles on Floor.

advantages of the latter. The tiling is fixed *under* the roll, as can be seen in the illustration above, instead of the framed wooden

top fixed *on* the bath, with its necessary dirty joint where wood and metal meet. The only criticism I have to offer on these American baths is that too much reliance is placed on efficient plumbing. It is better and it is not difficult to contrive a loose trap at the waste end for access to the pipes. Otherwise they are neat and clean, and, with their casing, retain the heat better than our English open baths.

The semi-sunk bath, with base or step of marble, is convenient but expensive. In the one shown here the taps are of the pillar valve kind, easy of access to repair or clean. The surrounding towel rail is heated from the domestic supply, as these rails always should be, as heat is required in the bathroom at all times, whereas radiators are discontinued in the summer months.



Semi-Sunk Bath in Platform of White Pentelikon Marble. Valves and Waste on Separate Standards away from Bath. Hot Towel Railing round End. Walls White and Blue Opalite Tiling. Ceiling Sheets of Opalite Framed in Aluminium Beads. Green Jointless Flooring, "Durato" Make.

Where it is not convenient to fix the bath with its end to a wall, certain models can be obtained which are constructed to be plumbed from the side. One is shown here. The walls and the door are sheathed with marble, giving a clean and sanitary appearance to the room. Tiles are an efficient substitute, and it is not necessary to take them any higher than 5 feet from the floor. If this method be too expensive (although one should bear in mind that a

good bathroom is a first charge only, and should not occasion any expense afterwards) a good plastered wall, rendered in Keene's cement

Double-Ended Bath with Taps and Waste in Centre of Side and Mixing-Chamber in Bath. Door and Walls Sheathed with Skyros and Tinos Marbles. Glass over Lavatory Basin Recessed in Wall, with Light over. Jointless Composition Floor.

and painted with a wall-flat (I recommend "Unicote," manufactured by Parsons of Oxford Street) according to the directions stated, will give a good and permanent result. If lime putty be used (and it is difficult to prevent this, apparently, as the average plasterer prefers it, for ease in trowelling, to Keene's or Parian, and will use it even if he has to buy it himself) no paint will be possible until after two or three years, as the action of the lime will burn it off almost as soon as it is applied. Lime, therefore, should be rigidly forbidden, and care should be taken to see that none is even brought into the house, on any pretext, while work is in operation.

A very effective tiling, known as Rust's vitreous, made, as far as

I can remember, by Chance Bros. of St. Helens, could be procured some years ago, but, since the war, I have not seen it, so presume it is no longer made. It was supplied in roughly-cut pieces of about 3 inches by 1 inch, in various shades of green. Each tile had the appearance of coarse semi-transparent green glass, of about ½ inch in thickness. For houses of the oak period I know of nothing better. Below is shown a bathroom with walls panelled up to 7 feet in height with this vitreous tiling, effective use being made of the various shades in which it was supplied.

Lavatory basins are largely matters for individual choice, and the

Bath with Glass Screen and Double Shower. Glass above Lavatory Inset in Wall. Good Type of Basin with Broad Top. Walls with Rust's Vitreous Tiling in Bordered Patterns. Green Jointless Composition Flooring.

available patterns are legion. The top, whether of marble or cast in the one piece with the basin, should be considerably larger than

the basin-opening, and should be dished so that it can be flooded with water without splashing the floor (see page 50).

Floors are important, especially as there are many "notions" on the market which are far from satisfactory. If the flooring be of boards, and not new, a thick, plain cork-carpet is as good a covering as any, providing it be well laid, closely fitted, and pasted down. Rubber, or virgin cork, is not advisable. The former has a tendency to swell and buckle, and the vulcanising sulphur works out in a disfiguring powder. Natural cork is comfortable to the bare feet, but being highly porous cannot be kept thoroughly clean. It is also expensive. A newly constructed bathroom should have neither cornice nor skirting, and the floor should be formed in slightly reinforced concrete, with a jointless composition floor of "Doloment," "Durato," or Bell's Asbestos laid on top. If the room-expanse be not too great (and a bathroom should be small, to avoid the draughts of large spaces) these floors are quite satisfactory, especially if kept oiled, occasionally, with linseed oil. The makers claim that they are warm to the feet, as the chief constituent is sawdust, but this is not strictly true. They are not as cold as marble, mosaic, tiles, or cement, but they are not as warm to the feet as cork-carpet. As a compensation, they are more easily kept clean, as, even with the most accurate cutting, there is always a dirt crevice between cork-carpet and the wall or skirting. The coldness of these composition floors is not a serious drawback, however, as the bathroom should be provided with a large mat or sheet for the floor.

A word as to mirrors in the bathroom. I prefer these unframed, a plate of silvered glass, with a thin sheet of lead as a backing, slightly let into the wall, so that steam cannot attack the silvering from behind. This precaution will prevent the silvering becoming pitted after a year or two. "Arctic" or rolled glass is best for the windows, and curtains or blinds should be rigidly excluded. If the door can be flush-panelled, so much the better. In the desire for cleanliness of appearance, do not be beguiled by vitreous-enamelled taps or other enamelled furniture. They look very well, when new, in the showroom, but they are likely to chip or perish, especially in a heated steam atmosphere.

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Brass or gun-metal, which can be kept polished, is preferable to this enamel, and also to nickel-plating, which soon wears off and shows the underlying brass in patches.

A word or two more before leaving the subject of bathrooms. Why is the bath I have described not illustrated here? Because it does not exist. Makers aver that the public does not desire such a pattern, the proof being that as they have never made a bath of this kind, no one has ever bought one, therefore it cannot be in demand. The public must be well looked after; it must have just what it wants, of course, this being just what the manufacturer chooses to give it, equally of course. It's all so simple, and so progressive. Yet—and this is the crucial truth—the manufacturer is right, in his way. When the public gets exactly what it requires, it makes a point of never asking for it, so the ideal thing does not sell, as a rule.

While on the subject of problems, there is the lighting of low rooms to be considered, always a matter of some difficulty. Plain brass candelabra from a central point in the ceiling (one can be seen in the room illustrated on page 41) are successful, and when these were imported from Holland, from makers such as Stokvis of Arnheim, in the years before the war, were well finished and quite inexpensive. Since then English manufacturers have reproduced a good many patterns quite successfully, but at an enhanced price. They are still, however, the cheapest and most satisfactory ceiling fittings, in my opinion. Pendants of any kind, however, in a very low room, are not satisfactory, unless a large table be placed underneath, permanently, as there is the danger of striking them with the head, in passing, with risk to the person, and the certainty of putting a lamp or two out of action if the fittings are wired for electric light.

In these days of cheap power plants one naturally assumes that the house is fitted with electric light. It is not only cheap and clean, but its convenience is so great. I am also glad to record my testimony of the super-efficiency of Pritchett and Gold's batteries, and especially of their business methods, which are beyond praise.

Failing electric current, however, I should recommend oil lamps (in spite of many drawbacks and the trouble which they entail) or

candles (which I know are expensive) to gas. To me, gas brackets or pendants are anathema, and in low rooms they blacken and defile everything. Cook with gas, use it to drive an engine, do anything with it you like, but for lighting of rooms leave it severely alone.

Pendants being often impossible, and wall brackets possessing the merit only of lighting the patch of wall immediately behind them, the standard or table lamp only remains, but here is scope for great ingenuity and resource. China vases can be fitted as lamps, and wood standards, covered with damask, velvet or, most effective of all, tooled leather, can be made quite cheaply. On page 16 is shown one of these wooden standards covered with velvet, and rimmed, at top and base, with hammered iron, in a room just under 9 feet in height, and very well it looks, in my judgment. The bulb is fitted to a stout candle (or imitation of one) of painted wood. I prefer electric candles made in this way, of wooden tubes, wired up to the bayonet holder at the top. They are cheap, effective (much more so than the stock type of opal glass), do not rattle, and when a lamp breaks, it *is* a lamp only, and not a complete candle fitting. In addition, if these wooden "candles" are properly socketed at the bottom, they sit upright in the sconces, instead of leaning at all angles, as is so frequently the case with one-piece glass candle lamps.

Shades are largely matters of individual taste, but I would like to conclude this chapter with one caution. Many colours absorb more light than they reflect. A certain amount, more or less, *must* be wasted in shading any lamp, but, especially with a small plant, economy is very desirable. My caution is this: try yellow or tints in which yellow predominates, before deciding on any other colour. No tint gives better results with a minimum of light absorption, and, at the same time, gives a better imitation of the best light of all, that of the sun.

CHAPTER IV

*FLOORS AND THEIR COVERINGS**

THAT loose rugs or carpets on polished floors are preferable to fitted carpets, in the house, is a proposition with which the generality of mistresses and maids will agree. Much depends upon the kind of rug or carpet, the arrangement and harmony of the colours, and a hundred and one other considerations, but from the points of view of hygiene and economy of labour (the latter a consideration of some importance in these days of servant problems) the fitted carpet is almost an unforgivable thing in the well-kept house. Absolute cleanliness is impossible, as there is always the crevice between it and the skirting, and the paint is bound to suffer from the impact of broom or sweeper, no matter how careful maids may be, and in these days a really careful maid has become almost a museum specimen. True, there is the vacuum-cleaner, but even with this the best possible sweeping or cleaning of a fitted carpet is, at the most, an apology for thoroughness.

Before dealing with the subject of rugs and carpets, a few words may be advisable with regard to polished floors and their maintenance. The usual plan, especially in old houses where the floors are of deal, generally worn and uneven, is to varnish the boards with a so-called staining varnish. That this soon wears off down to the bare deal flooring, especially if walked upon with boots, is one of the vexations in the life of the lady of the house. It is forgotten, even

* In illustrating this chapter the plan has been adopted of showing, in nearly every instance, a portion only of each carpet or rug, in order to represent the design to as large a scale as the size of the page will permit.

if it be known at all, that this wearing into bare patches is inevitable with the usual method of "staining." Old floors, even if they have not been varnished or polished before, are always greasy, more or less, and no stain, even if applied boiling hot, will penetrate through grease. To be effectual it must bite into the wood; coloured varnishes only lie on the surface. It would be a better, and more lasting, method to wash these old floors thoroughly with strong ammonia (of the strength sold commercially as "880"), and to paint them afterwards instead of experimenting with these so-called "staining varnishes." There are certain strippers sold for the purpose of removing old varnishes, but as they are nearly all constituted of naphtha, their excessive inflammability renders them dangerous to use, especially by the amateur.

There is no cheap method of dealing with old worn and greasy floors, and what to do for the best is often a problem. If the boards be of oak there is little difficulty; they can be scraped, planed, or, most effective of all, cleaned with steel shavings of varying degrees of coarseness or fineness. These shavings are produced, as a by-product, in engineers' workshops when steel is being turned in the lathe or planed with the machine. To use them is not a job for the inexperienced, as they will cut the hands like the edges of glass if not grasped in just the right way.

With deal boards, especially if shabby and worn, a thorough cleaning with ammonia or soda, to remove grease, and two or three coats of dark brown, or even black, paint (not a japan), is the best cheap treatment. Thin parquet of narrow oak boards of a quarter of an inch in thickness is effective if a clean finished appearance be desired. These boards must be fixed transversely to the flooring (that is, in the same direction as the joists), secured with fine panel-pins punched home, and the small holes filled with hard coloured wax. Sometimes these thin strips are put down on a coating of pitch-mastic applied to the boards underneath, but it is not safe to dispense with nailing, and I do not recommend any flooring without an efficient air circulation beneath, as the exclusion of air, unless it be absolute, will result in dry-rot in a few years. With this thin parquet

do not forget to provide access traps to electrical joint or tee boxes, or to gas points in the ceilings below, such as for pendant fittings, otherwise in the event of a leak or other fault you will be in trouble. The deal boards beneath should be cut out and a solid piece of oak (9 inches long by 5 inches wide is ample) screwed to the joists and flushed off with the top face of the parquet.

Mossul Rug. A Cheap Grade of Persian. Dark Blue Centre.

It is impossible, in the space available here, to enter into the subject of carpets and rugs at any length or in any technical detail. If the preference be expressed for Oriental rugs as compared with English pile carpets it is for several reasons, any of which are, to me, conclusive. These are:

1. The East ern rug is, artistically, far in advance of the English carpet, woven as it is (with almost negligible exceptions) entirely by hand, and designed almost entirely by eye and tradition. (This applies, especially, to rugs produced by nomadic tribes of

Central Asia.) With these conditions result the evidences of human endeavour coupled with human limitations, which the machine-made article never exhibits. The Oriental rug is also the product of races to whom time is not reckoned in hours or days in the method of modern commercialism, and is certainly not remunerated according to Western standards. The most expensive Eastern rug is therefore, in comparison, much cheaper than any Western production.

2. The good Eastern rug or carpet, if not impoverished by sea-damage or washing with chemicals (about which something will be said later on), has an infinitely longer wearing life than any modern European floor covering. This is due to the superiority of the wool which is used, and to the tightness of the weaving. Owing to the lowness of the pile, as a rule, Eastern rugs are more easily cleaned than English carpets.

3. Eastern rugs of any age (as distinct from the absolutely modern wares made for the European market), have similar historical associations—albeit, utterly unknown to us in the great majority of instances—to those which characterise our Old-World House and its

A Rug from the Deccan. Red Ground.

furniture. They are, therefore, if for no other reason, the best floor coverings.

4. As it is rare to find two Oriental rugs exactly alike, there is

little or no danger of fostering the bad habit of "matching," to which references have already been made. The general colour schemes of these rugs are so good, in nearly every instance, that you can assort

A Turkoman (Tekke) Rug. This Type is often known as Bokhara.

them, even in the one room, with little danger of offending the eye, even of the most captious critic.

5. A good Oriental rug improves in value with age and reasonable wear; an English carpet becomes second-hand, and loses its worth in the market almost as soon as it is put down on the floor. With any wear, its decline in value is rapid and excessive.

A Daghestan Rug. Dark Blue Ground.

6. Asiatic rugs (Persian, Turkish, Anatolian, Caucasian, Indian, and Chinese) range from the cheap to the very rare and costly, yet maintain their value, within reasonable limits (unless owing to a period of artificial inflation, such as during and immediately after the Great War). It is possible, therefore, to collect them, and by a judicious process of buying and selling ("weeding out" to use the collector's succinct phrase), or exchanging, to acquire gradually a really fine collection, a joy to possess, an education to study, and a really good investment to hold, yielding the best of all dividends, the daily pleasure of association and contemplation, always with the proviso that our occupant of the Old-World House has not listened to the Gospel according to the House Agent, to which reference has already been made.

Oriental carpets and rugs can be divided into the following rough classifications:

Turkish.

(*a*) Factory-made carpets, which include the so-called Standard Turkey (an abominable thing unfit to be compared with a good English carpet), and the Smyrna. Smyrna carpets are usually made with borders, corners, and central medallions. They are generally

coarse both in colour and weaving. The reds and blues, particularly those of the Standard Turkey, are crude and exceedingly inharmonious. They clash violently with anything good, in the way of furniture, which is placed upon them. The Demirdji Smyrnas are somewhat better, and have, as a rule, a pleasing all-over pattern. The Hereke Smyrnas are the finest and the best in colourings of all these factory-made Turkish carpets.

(*b*) Carpets and rugs not made in factories. These come chiefly from Anatolia and the Armenian districts bordering on Persia.

A Section of a Shirvan Rug. General Colours, Blue on Red Octagons.

They include the Ghiordes, Koula, Pergam or Bergam, Mujur, Ladik or Ladig, and the rugs from the Kurdish and the Cossack tribes,

the Yuruks and the Kazaks. Being the work of nomad tribes, these rugs are generally named after the districts or centres in which they are usually met with, with the inevitable result that similar varieties are often found in districts widely removed from each other.

All these tribal rugs can be divided into two classes: prayer rugs and those made for domestic or tent use. In the former, an arch with a mosque lamp suspended from its apex is usually introduced into the design, a single-pointed arch in the Ghiordes and a triple-point in the Ladik. In the tent rugs the patterns often vary considerably, even in the same district. The same applies with colourings, especially in the case of the Kazak rugs.

A Kilim Rug. Cross Stripes of White, Red, and Green.

Caucasian.

These are principally from the province of Daghestan and include the following ;

Kuba or Kubistan, sometimes called Kabistan.
Shirvan.
Derbend.
Kazak or Cossack.
Soumak.
Karabagh.
Kilim.

A good map of the districts bordering the Caspian Sea will show these and other names associated with Caucasian or Northern Persian rugs. Perhaps some of the finest carpets ever made in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries came from Ardabil, in the same district, south of Baku.

These rugs, being the product of wandering tribes, are known from the centres where they are usually found. This accounts, in some measure, for the widely diverse character of many coming from the Caspian shores or the adjoining provinces. Thus the real origin of many of the Kazak rugs is obscure;* those from Shirvan are more localised, and, therefore, more easily recognisable. The Kilim is known by many other names, but is more properly a covering for a divan than for the floor or the beaten ground upon which a tent is pitched, being woven like a fabric, without pile, and alike on both sides, after the same manner as an English Kidderminster carpet.

A Kirman Mat. Rose-Pink Centre.
(One of a Pair.)

Persian.

It will be seen, from the foregoing, that the term "Persian" often implies a distinction without a real difference, Azerbaijan being really a northern province of Persia. It is also quite impossible, in a book of this size, to give even a representative selection of the names which are applied to the rugs of Persia and the Caucasus, nor is it practicable to separate the one from the other, the carpets from Ardabil belonging really to the Caucasus, yet being regarded as not only Persian (as they were at the period when they were made), but of the very finest kind. There is also the question of age to

* I heard recently of one of these rugs which was described as the work of a province in Persia called Kazak.

be taken into account, many districts being renowned for their beautiful carpets in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, yet producing none at the present day or for a century or so past.

The true Persian carpets are of all grades, ages, and values, yet are all justly esteemed for their harmony of colouring and refinement of design as compared with those of the wandering tribes of Central Asia. Among the true Persian rugs are included those of Karabagh from the Caucasian border. Others which may be met with frequently are:

A Koula Rug. Light Blue Ground.

Tabriz. — Fine in design, close and harsh to the touch, and tight in weaving. Found in rugs and large carpets, and sometimes incorrectly styled as Kirman in the carpet trade. Very good carpets for the collector to commence with.

Feraghan.—Carpets and rugs. Generally satisfactory as a class, but sometimes rather lifeless in colouring. Good wearing qualities, and not expensive to buy.

Saraband.—Carpets, long "runners" or strips, and rugs. Generally with pine-cone pattern of red on blue ground. Good pieces for the collector, ranging from the inexpensive to the exceedingly fine and rare.

Section of a Hamadan "Runner."

Jushaghan.—Also sometimes known incorrectly as Ispahan. Fine and close in design and weave; among the best of the Persian rugs. It should be noted here that what are usually known as the real Ispahan carpets occupy a class the existence of which many authorities do not admit.* These carpets are never later than early eighteenth century, often much earlier. In certain great houses, notably at Knole Park (which has the advantage of being open to the public on certain days in the week), are examples of these sixteenth and seventeenth century Ispahan carpets, which for design and wonder of colouring, jewel-like blues and greens, and,

* It is impossible, in the deficient state of our knowledge of early carpets (fifteenth to seventeenth century), to hazard even a guess at the districts from which they originated. Certainly in design and colouring these fine carpets and rugs, which are known in the trade as Ispahan, appear to occupy a class distinct from any other products of the looms of Persia.

above all, for the incomparable Ispahan orange and rose shades, have no rivals among the rugs of Persia. One can say truly that

A Chinese Rug. Peach-Bloom Ground.

one has never known a really fine Persian carpet until the wonderful specimens at Knole, Holland House, and elsewhere have been seen.

Their value is, of course, fabulous. Reverting to carpets within the means of the average collector, the following may be noted:

A Ladig Prayer Rug. Red Centre.

Muskabad. — Usually remarkable for their lustrous pile.

Hamadan.—Small and good in design, and not expensive. Generally with a border of plain camel-hair.

Kashan.—A rug which is often woven of fine silk. Sometimes known as Saruk when made from wool.

Saruk.—Varying from the coarse to the extremely fine. (See Kashan.)

Sehna. — Patterns of which vary very widely, from small stripes to diaper pine cones, and sometimes medallions and corners.

Bijar.—Small rugs and large carpets. Often called by other names.

Khorassan.—From the province of that name, which includes the Meshed. Usually bold in design and good in colouring.

Herat.—Usually in a well-known diaper design which is found in other rugs, and styled the Herati pattern.

Kirman.—Never of any great age, delicate and soft in design and colouring, often due to incredible fineness in weaving. Perhaps the best of the less expensive Persian carpets for delicacy of colour and general appearance.

Shiraz.—From the province of Farsistan, close to the Persian Gulf. Sometimes of silk, and frequently with a design of hexagonal

A Ghiordes Prayer Rug.

panels. It is said that at one time the carpets and rugs of Shiraz were reserved for royal use, but there appears to be no definite authority for the statement.

A Feraghan Carpet. Pink-Red Ground.

Central Asian or Turkoman.

Include the rugs from Western Turkestan (usually known as Bokhara, although very few are actually made there) and from nomad tribes such as the Tekke and the Pindé. These tribes roam from the northern frontier of Afghanistan up to Samarkand and west to the eastern shore of the Caspian Sea.

South of this territory we get the true Afghan rugs, often incorrectly known as Bokhara, generally with a pattern of large octagons in dark red and white, coarse and fiery, typical of the warlike natures of the tribes themselves.

Section of a Saraband (Mir) Runner. (One of a Pair.) Late Seventeenth or Early Eighteenth Century.

South of Afghanistan and south-east of Persia, abutting on the Arabian Sea, down to the port of Karachi, with India as its eastern neighbour, is the province of Beluchistan. The Beluch rugs are coarse, and with strong dark red colourings like the hue of congealed blood, suggestive and characteristic of their makers.

A Kashan Carpet. Green Ground, Buff Centre.

A Persian (Kesas) Carpet. Blue-Green Ground, Red Centre. The Ispahan Motives are followed closely here.

Chinese Rugs and Carpets.

These are now made for the Western markets and are sold at commercial prices. The older varieties usually have a blue design on a yellow or peach-bloom ground, and when fine are very valuable.

A Finely Knotted Saruk Rug. (One of a Pair.)

The usual Chinese carpet of commerce has, as a rule, a white design on a blue ground.

The greatest confusion in the classification of Oriental carpets and rugs prevails in the trade. This is due, partly, to the difficulty in obtaining exact knowledge regarding localities of origin, owing to the nomadic character of the tribes which produce them, but chiefly to the habit of dealers of promoting their wares to one or two grades higher than the one to which they actually belong: Afghans to Bokharas, and so on. Both importers and merchants are frequently guilty of using names of districts, wide apart from each other, to

A Section of an Antique Persian Carpet. Dark Blue Ground.

indicate the rugs of the one locality, and this often among themselves in their dealings. It is almost analogous to an assemblage of traders

carrying on their business, each in a different tongue, at the same time. The trade, in this country, in Oriental carpets of the finer kinds is in the hands of Armenians, almost exclusively, and there is no doubt that they do know their wares, in a way which no other race does, Turks and Persians only excepted.

The subject is so wide and so complicated that to attempt any general description, such as the one given here, is to be inaccurate, perforce, by reason of the necessary brevity, if for no other.

A few cautions in buying rugs may be stated in conclusion of this chapter.

Oriental rugs, other than factory-made goods, are rarely, if ever, woven in strictly rectangular form. The degree of departure from the square or oblong which may be permitted is a matter of personal taste on the part of the buyer. The exactly woven nomadic rug hardly exists, but a good piece, no matter how irregular in outline, should lie flat on the floor. I do not refer to one which has been folded up for a long time, or the corners of which have curled, as these faults *may* be remedied by damping, stretching, or by heavy weights. The rug, however, which owes any such defects to uneven weaving should be seriously discounted in price, as it will lie unevenly as long as it exists, and nothing will remedy this fault.

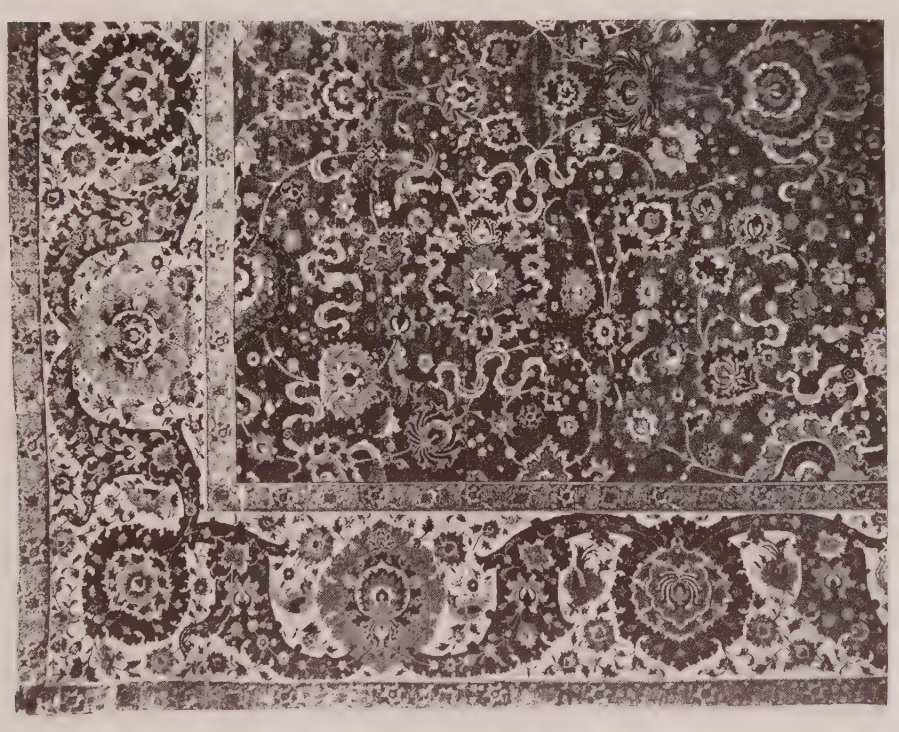
While these Oriental rugs possess, as a rule, wearing qualities which are really wonderful, considering how thin many of them are, they can be impoverished very seriously by damp, moth, sea-damage, or by washing with chemicals or acids. The first three may be the result of accident or carelessness, but the last is deliberately done to give a spurious appearance of age. Unfortunately this reprehensible practice seriously impairs the wearing life of the rug. The intending purchaser will be well advised, therefore, to observe the following cautions:

1. Insist on the carpet or rug being laid flat on the floor, not suspended from a wall, or thrown, carelessly, across a settee.

2. Inspect the rug from the back, and look for signs of repairs, damage, or splitting of the warp. If in doubt, hold it up to the light.

3. Gather up a fold of the rug between the clenched fists held closely together, and then strain the threads by turning the hands, in a semicircular motion, away from each other, so as to put a strain on the backing. Try this both ways, of the warp and the weft. If the rug be sound nothing will happen, but if sea-damaged or impoverished by chemical washing, the back threads will crack and the rug break into a slit or hole. It is as well to ask permission before applying this test, but if the rug be sold as sound, it should not be refused.

4. Fold the rug tightly, and look at the knotting from the face side very closely. If the colours appear much brighter close to the



A Section of a Persian Carpet (Ispahan?). Mid-Sixteenth Century.

knots or from the back, then bleaching by chemicals is to be suspected. If a number of minute holes can be seen when the rug

is held to the light, then it has, probably, suffered from the ravages of moth.

5. A rug much worn, or badly mended, will not stand much wear. Its days are gone. Such a piece, especially if it be intended to put it on the floor, will be a bad investment.

6. A fine rug is better than the most gilt-edged security or the most tastefully printed share certificate ever devised. That is why the best rugs in old-world houses are, as a rule, found north of the Tweed.

CHAPTER V

THE DEVELOPMENT OF TYPES IN FURNITURE

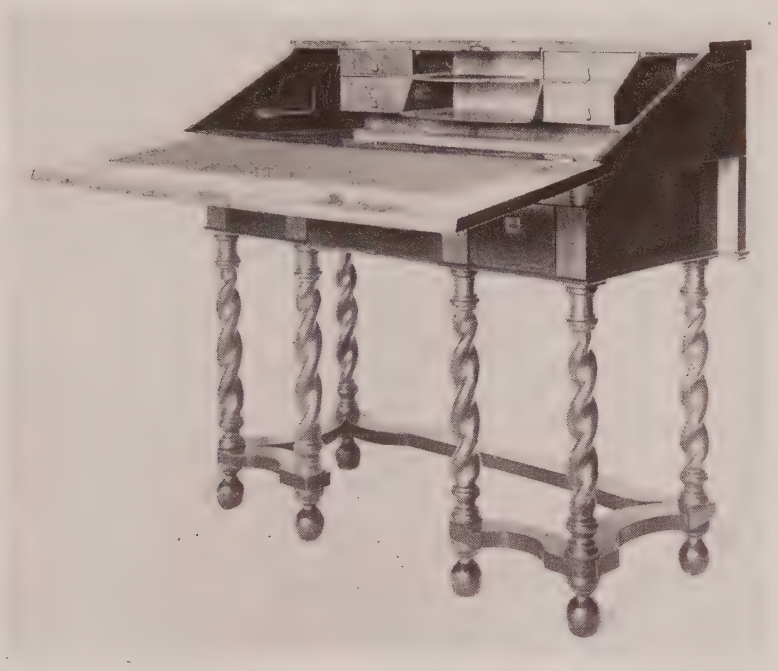
IT should not be necessary to have to point out the various types in furniture which are evolved at certain periods, but, judging from enquiries which are made for pieces which are utterly anachronistic, some hints in this direction are really required. I propose to subdivide English furniture into three broad classes: (1) Chairs, which include settees, stools, and smaller pieces; (2) wall furniture, chests, bookcases, cabinets, wardrobes, cupboards or presses; and (3) floor furniture, tables and kindred articles. Each section is capable of further sub-classification. *Chairs, settees, settles, and stools* are all very old in type and function. Upholstery is rarely found before 1660, and then commences with squabs or pads, lightly filled with tow or horse-hair, and placed on a seat or tied to a back. The chair with fixed upholstery does not become common before 1685, although exceptional pieces are found of much earlier date. Easy "grandfather," or wing chairs, are rare before 1685, but came into general use during the first quarter of the eighteenth century. The settle is an oak piece, but the settee, especially of the upholstered kind, with solid padded backs and seats, begins shortly after 1689. It develops into the open-back type, formed by a multiple of two or more chair backs, shortly after 1700. Upholstered furniture, in possessing a certain definite purpose, does not vary much from that with seat and back of solid wood at any period after the Gothic. Such fashions as the day-bed or long couch are merely logical developments from the chair-form, the seat being extended so that the user can recline instead of sitting.

Wall Furniture.—The chest is an oak piece, as a rule, and the type is early. Chests were made during the lacquer period and occasionally of mahogany, but, in a general sense, the cabinet or press with doors supplants the chest with a lid, towards the end of the seventeenth century. The court or standing cupboard, the hutch, and the credence, are all oak pieces, but they resemble, in principle, the cabinets of the marqueterie or lacquer periods. They differ in the sense that the later development was in the direction of the greater division of accommodation. The chest is a box into which things are laid or thrown together. The standing cupboard has two doors below and one or two above. The advantage of providing a piece of furniture in which articles can be placed in an upright position, while

The Development of the Scrutoir or Bureau. (1) *The Type of* 1670. *Closed.*
(*Capt. The Hon. Richard Legh.*)

stuffs, fabrics, or linen can be laid flat and kept separate, was soon appreciated, and we get the piece with a cupboard above and drawers below.

When the faculty of writing becomes a general accomplishment, which is not until the close of the Stuart period, special furniture begins to be made for the purpose. The first pieces are the hinged fall-front escritoires, in cabinet form, with drawers below and nests of small drawers and compartments behind the large writing flap. The second type is the bureau, either with or without a cabinet upper-part. Next follows, in the middle of the eighteenth century, the writing table with leather-lined top, either on four legs or with two pedestals containing drawers or cupboards. The pedestal writing table is never a walnut piece, still less does it belong to the oak period.



The Development of the Scrutoir or Bureau. The Type of 1670. *Open.**
(*Capt. The Hon. Richard Legh.*)

English furniture, in the oak years, must have been very scanty in amount and variety, and each piece must have had a definite use.

* By an omission on the part of the photographer, the two "gates" were not opened at right angles, to support the flap, when this picture was taken.

In the walnut years this defined purpose loses its earlier significance, in many instances, when use begins to be subordinated to decorative purpose, until, towards the end of the eighteenth century, we get such pieces as tripod banner or pole screens, which have no function at all beyond one of ornament, unless to act as a shade to the fire, where one would have thought that the obvious alternative was to sit further away from the grate, not to evolve a special, and often a costly, piece of furniture as ill-fitted, as a rule, to withstand extreme

The Development of the Scrutoir or Bureau. (2) *The Type of* 1685–90. *Very Rare.*
(C. H. F. Kinderman, Esq.)

heat as the powdered face of a Georgian beauty. Types multiply exceedingly during the eighteenth century in the direction of tables

The Development of the Scrutoir or Bureau. (3) *The Fall-Front Writing Cabinet of* 1690–5. (*C. H. F. Kinderman, Esq.*)

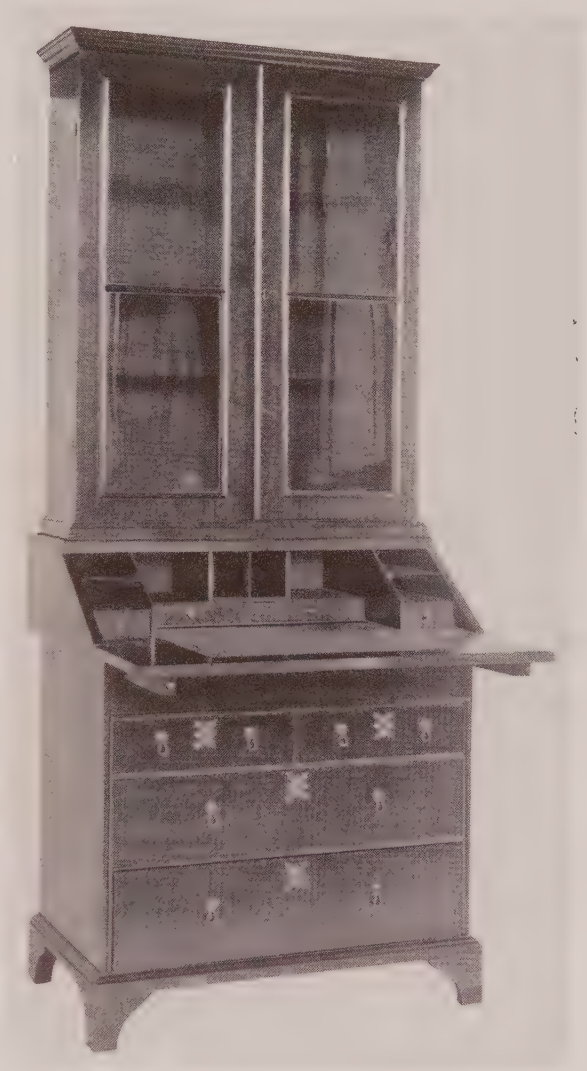
designed for specific as compared with general purposes, such as dining tables, side tables, card tables, occasional tables, writing tables and the like.

The china-cabinet pre-supposes china worthy of the dignity of being placed on an open niche or behind doors, and bookcases indicate books in sufficient number to warrant a special piece of furniture

The Development of the Scrutoir or Bureau. (4) *The Bureau in form of a Desk on Chest of Drawers. The Type of* 1695.

made to contain them. Pepys possessed a library as early as the first years of Charles II., and Sympson made the bookcases to contain the

volumes. Both library and bookcases are now in Magdalen College, Oxford. Pepys, however, was highly exceptional in possessing books in any number (although numbers existed, and we can only assume that reading was not a favourite pursuit at the time), and the bookcase does not become a general article until after 1700. The china-cabinet is even later. I have seen china-cases of the period of Anne, or even earlier, but rarely made to display their contents, the doors being nearly all fitted with solid panels of wood. The true china-cabinet is essentially a Georgian piece. Where a walnut cabinet of the early years of the eighteenth century is glazed and sash-barred, such glazing is nearly always a later addition, although transparent glass was often substituted for original silvered plates, as in the cabinet above.



The Development of the Scrutoir or Bureau. (5) *The Desk on Chest Stand with Cabinet above. The Original Silvered Glass in the Upper Panels has been Replaced by Clear Sheet Glass.* 1695–1700 *Type.* (*Capt. The Hon. Richard Legh.*)

In the category of wall furniture must be placed tables intended to stand against the wainscotting, which includes the sideboard. Up to almost the end of the Chippendale period, the side table, on four or more legs, and with or without drawers in the frieze, acted as the sideboard; etymologically, it *is* the true sideboard. In the hands of Hepplewhite and his school, its functions were increased by the provision of drawers for napery, cellarettes to hold wine bottles,

The Development of the Scrutoir or Bureau. (6) *The Plain-Sided Bureau of* 1700–10. (*Capt. The Hon. Richard Legh.*)

square boxes or round urns made to hold knives, forks, and spoons, or lined with lead and fitted with taps for rose-water. Then we

get the sideboard top in two, or even three stages, arranged for the display of plate, and a brass rail or curtain rod at the back to complete the effect. Defined on these lines, there is no such thing as a sideboard, as distinct from the side table, even as late as the Chippendale period, yet I have heard of enquiries for sideboards of seventeenth-century date, when the standing cupboard or the credence were the only pieces of furniture which were used for this purpose. To expect to find such a piece as a Stuart sideboard is analogous to looking for an Elizabethan motor-car.

The Development of the Scrutoir or Bureau. (7) *The Double-Domed Bureau Cabinet of* 1700.

Bedsteads.—The bedstead of both the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries

The Development of the Scrutoir or Bureau. (8) *The Bureau-Cabinet Type of* 1695–1700, *with Strong Dutch Influence.* (*Sir Leicester Harmsworth, Bart.*)

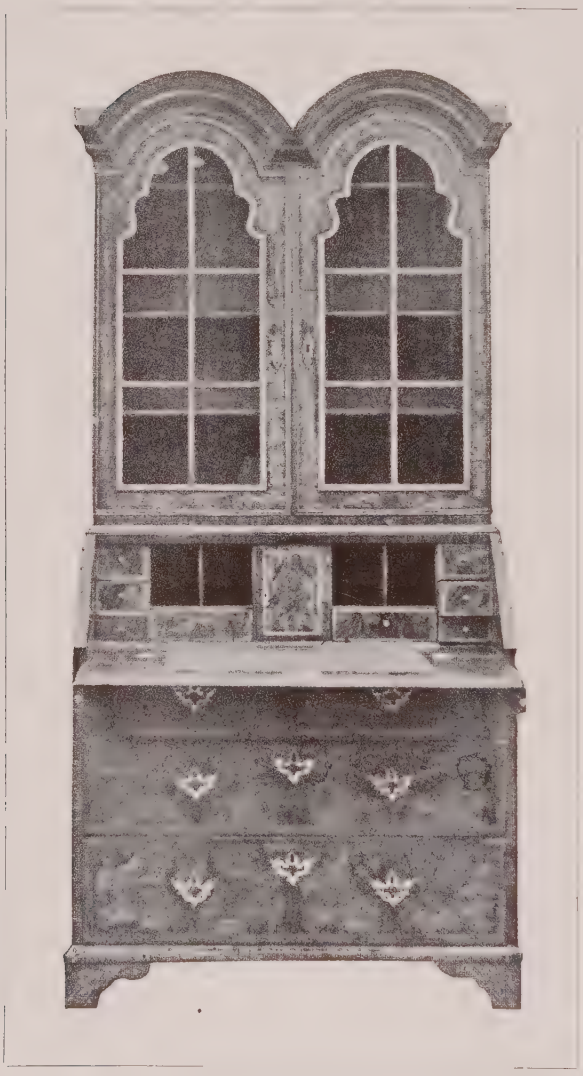
was either of the four-post or the open-sided box-type. The bedstead with head- and foot-boards only, and without tester, but sometimes with a separate canopy or draperies suspended from a corona, was typically French, and the idea, in spite of its obvious advantages from the point of view of hygiene, did not appear to become popular here until the very end of the eighteenth century. The open bedstead of the oak or walnut periods does not exist.

Tables, apart from those made to stand against a wall, can be best considered in order of type.

The Bureau Cabinet on Opposite Page, Shown Open.

The long refectory table dates from very early times; its successor, the draw table (see Chapter IX), is a seventeenth-century innovation

borrowed from Holland and Germany. Tables of small size (what we know as "occasional") are rare in the early seventeenth century, but are made during Cromwell's period and after. In spite of the rage for play, card tables are almost unknown in the Stuart period; they do not become general until the eighteenth century. Writing tables have already been considered. The tripod form of furniture dates from the early years of Anne, but only for pedestals or *guéridons* made to support busts or candelabra. The tripod table is not known, as far as I am aware (unless we include tables of triangular form, which are supported on three instead of four legs), until the middle of the eighteenth century. I refer to the kind supported on a central pillar or column with a tripod base.



The Development of the Scrutoir or Bureau. (9) *The Plain-Sided Bureau of* 1700–10, *with Cabinet above. The Lattice Glazing of the Upper Doors is not Original.*

It is in the bedroom where the

absence of certain well-known types is remarkable. Thus the wash-stand, or anything like it, just begins to appear in the last decade or

The Development of the Scrutoir or Bureau. (10) *The Desk Mounted on Cabriole-Leg Stand. The Smaller Type of* 1710–15. *(C. H. F. Kinderman, Esq.)*

two of the eighteenth century, either combined with dressing-glasses and boxes and other apparatus of the toilet in such multiple pieces as the "vanity tables," or as a small corner article, with a hole in the top for the basin, which, in size, could not have greatly exceeded the dimensions of the average pudding-bowl. This is in the last twenty

years of the eighteenth century; before that, nothing! How did our ancestors wash, or did they wash at all?

Similarly, the dressing-table combined with a toilet glass (although known in the Chippendale period—*e.g.*, the example at Kimbolton) was an exceedingly rare piece at any period prior to 1800. Its place must have been taken by the chest of drawers with one of the small glasses (oval, circular, or shield-shaped, on a box-plateau), placed on top. It is possible to find these dressing-glasses of as early a date as that of Anne. They are usually small in size, and with a miniature bureau in place of the later box. Very charming many of them are,

The Development of the Scrutoir or Bureau. (11) *Rare Type of Bureau with Side-Opening Flaps.* (*C. D. Rotch, Esq.*)

although good examples have become very scarce of recent years, and expensive to buy in consequence.

The hanging wardrobe is also a rare piece, and when found prior to 1770 is usually an old cabinet bedstead or a press which has been converted. Masculine attire did not demand hanging space; clothes were usually folded and laid on trays. Sheraton was the first of the eighteenth-century designers to illustrate in a published book a typical hanging wardrobe. Feminine garments must also have been laid away in presses, chests or cupboards. The eighteenth-century wardrobe, as a general thing, was a small piece of furniture, with very little holding capacity. It was often reinforced by one of the double chests, known as "tallboy," and the two pieces were often made to correspond.

The Development of the Scrutoir or Bureau. The Bureau (11) *Shown Open. Although Early in Type, this is probably a Late Eighteenth-Century Piece.*

Some articles which were made for special purposes, such as the small powdering tables, which went out of use when wigs ceased to be

worn, do not recur again, but die out with the departing fashion. Such of these wig stands as survive to-day are useful for flowers or pot-pourri. With these diminutive washstands and dressing-glasses went such toilet implements as tongue-scrapers and back-scratchers, which the later cleaner living and an occasional bath rendered unnecessary.

The cheval glass made to stand on the floor is a rare article of furniture prior to 1760, but becomes very general after that date. Those of the Sheraton period, with their original candle-brackets, are desirable pieces, especially when not too large and unwieldy.

Cleanliness did not rank as a virtue, but rather as an eccentricity, even as late as the end of the Georgian period. Baths were unknown,

The Development of the Scrutoir or Bureau. (12) *Mahogany Writing Table with Carved and Gilt Enrichments. Period and Style of William Kent, c.* 1725. (*The Duke of Devonshire.*)

and washing facilities were on the homœopathic scale. Inside sanitation of any kind was exceptional—in fact, it was rare in the early days

of Victoria. We have advanced considerably during the last fifty years or so. Nowadays the workman's cottage is incomplete unless it contain a bath, if it be only in the scullery. Its uses vary from that of the weekly wash-tub to a receptacle for coal or vegetables. It will be better appreciated, perhaps, by the younger generation.

* * * * *

There is no more fascinating hobby than the collecting of links in the chain of English furniture evolution. If one possess the purse of a millionaire and a house the size of a large museum, then it is possible to possess, and live with, the actual pieces themselves. To one whose means do not suffice (other considerations do not matter very much then), there is an easier and cheaper method—to collect photographs. This has been my hobby for many years,

The Development of the Scrutoir or Bureau. (13) *Mahogany Writing Table with Carved and Gilt Enrichments. Period and Influence of William Kent, c.* 1730. (*The Duke of Devonshire.*)

with the result that I can study pieces, scattered all over Great Britain, at my leisure, and can arrange them, photographically, in

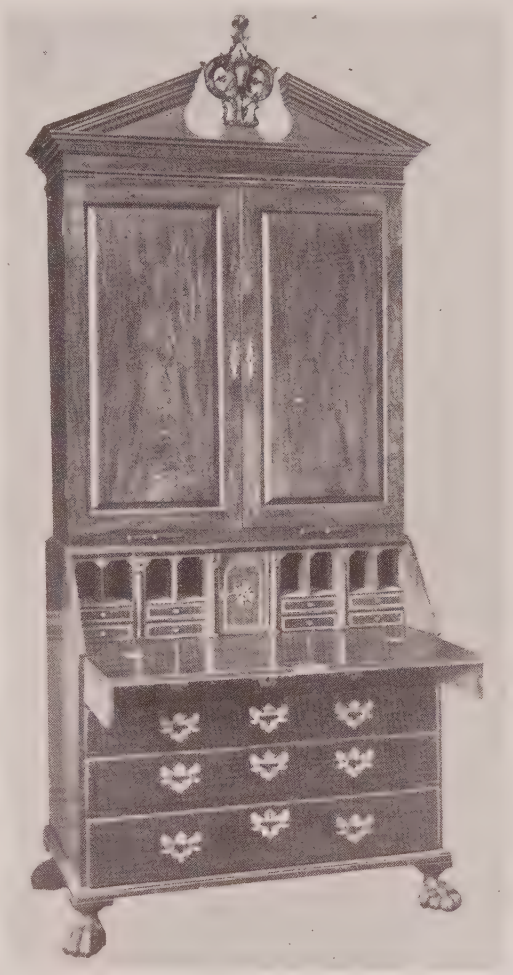
their sequence of development. Incidentally, by the forming of such a collection, the illustrating of a book such as this becomes a possibility. There is, naturally, the vexatious thought that many links in the evolutionary chain are missing, but there must be some limits assigned, and even if I possessed a complete series of every type, space-considerations would forbid their illustration in these pages. It may be pointed out, with some advantage to the collector, that the more complete the sequence of such photographs becomes, the more evident is the fact, that a new type entirely, is rarely, if ever, created. Here and there we find a piece which, in design or purpose, appears to be an absolute novelty until we discover another which connects it with a well-known class. It is almost akin to penetrating

The Development of the Scrutoir or Bureau. (14) *Mahogany Writing Table with Trussed Pilasters, c.* 1730. *In the Style of William Kent.* (*C. H. F. Kinderman, Esq.*)

to the inner consciousness of the old craftsmen, utterly unknown to us by name or record, when we notice how an idea has been borrowed

from one source, a detail from another, or a constructional invention from a third, all combined together in the one piece.

I propose, in conclusion of this chapter, to attempt, in text and illustration, to trace the development of the writing table or cabinet, in form of escritoire, bureau bookcase, and table, from the earliest type, that of the later Stuart years, to the close of the eighteenth century. Gaps exist, doubtless, but these the collector, who trains his eye to observe and his mind to remember, can fill in for himself. For convenience of reference I have numbered each example here. The same evolutionary system can be traced in the instances of the chair, the bookcase, and tables of various kinds, dining, occasional, card, etc., and the same system can be adopted, with such pieces, as is outlined in these pages.



The Development of the Scrutoir or Bureau. (15) *Mahogany Writing Cabinet on Carved Paw-Feet, c.* 1730–40.

The bureau or desk, in the sense in which the term is used here, is, primarily, a box with a sloping lid, and examples are known as early as the first years of the seventeenth century. They are always small in size, and were made, probably, for the use of the illuminator of manuscripts, being fitted inside,

as a general rule, for bladders of colour, brushes, and the like. It may be an arbitrary distinction, but I think the chief difference between the desk and the bureau is that in the former the lid is hinged at the top, in the latter at the bottom. The desk-lid, when closed, gives the necessary support to the paper, card or book of the writer or the illuminating artist. Where these lids are carved, which is often the case, even this facility is denied, the desk then being merely a portable box made to contain things, the sloping lid being only for the sake of appearance.

The Development of the Scrutoir or Bureau. (16) *Mahogany Bureau Cabinet with Silvered Glass Panels in Upper Doors, c.* 1740. (*Sir Leicester Harmsworth, Bart.*)

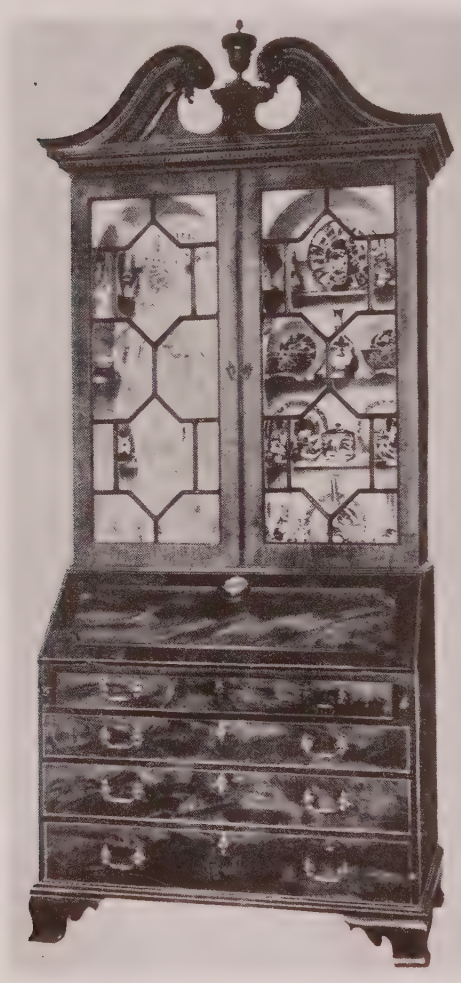
The true bureau has the lid hinged at the bottom, and when opened is supported on draw-out slides or pull-out "gate" legs, such as on No. 1 here. The *inside* of the flap is used for writing, and behind are usually small drawers or compartments for books or papers. The late seventeenth-century bureau differs from that of the eighteenth in two important respects; the slope of the top is flatter and the bureau proper, whether on a leg-stand or a chest of drawers, is distinct, in the earliest examples of all, with the desk overhanging at the sides, as in No. 1 here. The spiral legs in this bureau are of

the kind known as a double-bine, semi-open twist. The corner legs act as pivots on which the opening gates turn. In the photograph showing this bureau open, the two "gates" should have been pulled out at right angles to their present position, where they would act as supports to the top. This example is of oak partly veneered with walnut, and dates from about 1670.

The Development of the Scrutoir or Bureau.
(17) *Mahogany Bureau Cabinet, c.* 1750.
(*J. Rochelle Thomas, Esq.*)

Rare as this type is, the one shown here in No. 2 is more exceptional still. This is truly a secretaire, having a throw-back lid and a fall-front, without the bureau slope. It is of much too rare a form to take a defined place in the chronological arrangement of English furniture, although in that of Holland this secretaire form is somewhat better known. The veneer is a pollarded or burred yew tree of fine colour. The escutcheons are original, but the drop-handles are later, probably an addition soon after the piece was made to obviate the necessity of using the key to open a drawer. Had the original intention been to provide both escutcheon and handle the two would either have been combined, or two ring-handles provided for each drawer. Apparently the piece

lacks the finish of bracket-feet, but it is original in its present state, with concealed castors underneath. It is somewhat too early in type for a plinth, and, in addition, this would have raised the writing bed too high for comfortable use.



The Development of the Scrutoir or Bureau. (18) *Rare Mahogany Bureau China-Cabinet of Early Chippendale Period, c.* 1750.

A much more usual, and, presumably, much more popular form was the fall-front "scrutoir" as shown in No. 3. Pieces of this kind are found either veneered with plain walnut or inlaid with marqueterie. I have never seen one decorated with lacquer. It is probable that they were made to pair with the double-door cabinets of the same period, which they frequently resemble very closely in many details. One significant change occurs in the building of houses of the lesser type shortly after about 1680; the walls are not so massive, and instead of the flue stacks being built as outside projections, they are formed inside, in what we know as chimney-breasts. Such a feature in a Stuart house or one of earlier period is an anachronism. This breast involved recesses on either side of the fireplace, and engendered the fashion of making certain pieces not exactly in pairs, but in couples made to balance, if not to correspond.

In the living rooms we find these fall-front escritoires, with doored cabinets to match; in the bedrooms the wardrobe with sliding trays

The Development of the Scrutoir or Bureau. The Cabinet (18) *Shown Open.*

was made to balance with a double chest of drawers (in England known as a "tall-boy," and in America as a "high-boy"*)

* Both names are of recent origin. The "haut-boy" (Fr. *haut-bois*) is the old name for the oboe, and "tall-boy" during the eighteenth century indicated either a tall drinking glass or a chimney-pot. In old inventories these "tall-boys" are styled double-chests.

made of the same height and width and with cornices and bases to match.

The Carved Pediment of (18) *Shown to Larger Scale.*

One was accustomed, in the mid-Victorian novels, to read of secret hiding-places in old pieces of furniture, almost as important as the sliding panel which flew aside when a spring was touched. I have never met with the latter, and considering the way in which old wainscottings were made, with panels seldom more than about fourteen inches by nine, I am emboldened to make the statement that they never existed, Horace Walpole, Mrs. Radcliffe, or "Monk" Lewis notwithstanding. It is in these upright secretaires, however, where ingenious secret cavities are frequently contrived, although some thought and a few measurements will always cause their presence to be suspected.

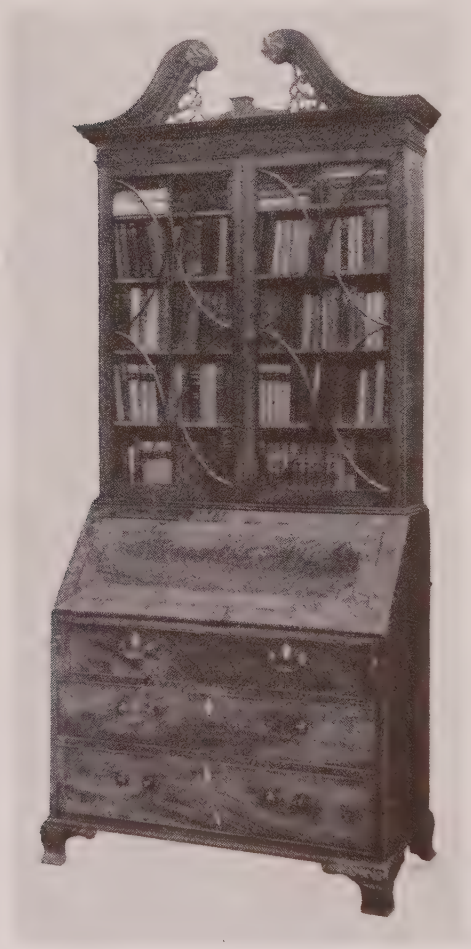
The true bureau—that is, one not combined with cabinet or bookcase—develops into a desk on a chest of long drawers, without the kneehole as in No. 2, the forward projection of the flap, when opened, rendering this unnecessary. The latest type of the seventeenth-century bureau is still a separate desk on a stand, sometimes with an overhang on each side (an example is given in the chapter on Marqueterie Furniture), more often of the same width as the chest, but divided from it by a boldly projecting moulding, as in No. 4. In No. 5 there is this side-overhang, without dividing moulding, with a cabinet upper part, the doors of which were originally

glazed with silvered glass. The cut-out bracket plinth is a restoration here. In Nos. 4 and 5 will be noticed an innovation which persists, with the slope-fronted bureau, throughout the eighteenth century; the fall is supported, when down, on two pull-out slides each fitted with either a knob or a small drop-handle. Beneath the slope-front also is nearly always a cavity, access to which is obtained by pushing back a slide immediately behind the writing bed. I have seen these slides made to release only by pressure on a secret spring, usually formed of a long piece of wood fixed at one end only. The signs of the fixing of these wooden "springs" can often be seen inside these slides, but either owing to wear, accident or force, they are nearly always missing at the present day.

The eighteenth-century bureau-development is in the direction of the plain side, as in No. 6, which is an obvious economy in manufacture, with little or no loss in decorative value. The bureau also begins to broaden, some walnut examples being as large as 40 or 45 inches in width. The interiors are also nearly always very elaborately fitted, with central cupboard flanked by fluted pilasters attached to the fronts of narrow vertical drawers. Occasionally the door and pilasters are fixed to a central box made to pull out, with secret drawers or compartments behind, with releasing springs actuated either from the inside of the cupboard or the small drawer cavity below. It is a sign of high quality in the walnut pieces of this period when cross-cut wood is substituted for the long-grain, although the former is not nearly as durable, and requires frequent attention in the way of re-glueing.

The double-domed bureau, as in No. 7, must have been a very fashionable piece, judging from the numbers which have survived. The Dutch inspiration of this form is to be suspected, and in No. 8 it is even more convincing. This example has an unusual form of cornice, and is of extremely fine quality throughout. Every surface is veneered with pieced pollarded olive (often known as "maza-wood"), and the inside fittings of this superb piece are worthy of close examination. In a later chapter, dealing with the plain walnut furniture of the early period of Anne, other examples of this fine manner will

be illustrated, perhaps, in many respects, the most interesting, as it is certainly the most decorative, in the whole history of English furniture.



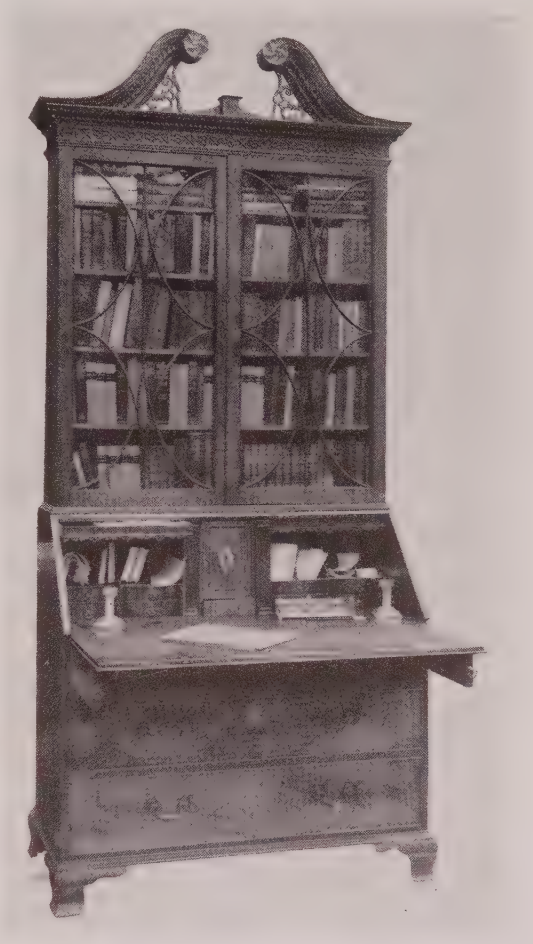
The Development of the Scrutoir or Bureau. (19) *Mahogany Bureau Bookcase of the Early Hepplewhite Period, c.* 1780. (*Viscount Rothermere.*)

The double-domed cabinet, No. 9, differs from No. 7 in having the lower part with flush sides, the projecting moulding dividing the bureau from its chest being omitted. It can therefore be regarded as being somewhat later in date.

The next stage in evolution is to mount the bureau on cabriole, or turned, legs, without superstructure. Furniture has a tendency to become smaller, and of the character known as "occasional," in the last years of Anne and the early part of the reign of George I. These small bureaux are nearly always made in two sections, an upper part, generally fitted with side handles, made to drop into a lower stage, designed in imitation of the stools of the time (No. 10). A similar bureau fashion will be noticed in many of the walnut dressing-glasses of the same period. This double-carcase form of bureau persists throughout the early mahogany years, from 1725 to nearly 1750.

A peculiar and rare form of the bureau is given in No. 11. Exceptional in character as this piece is, by a curious coincidence I

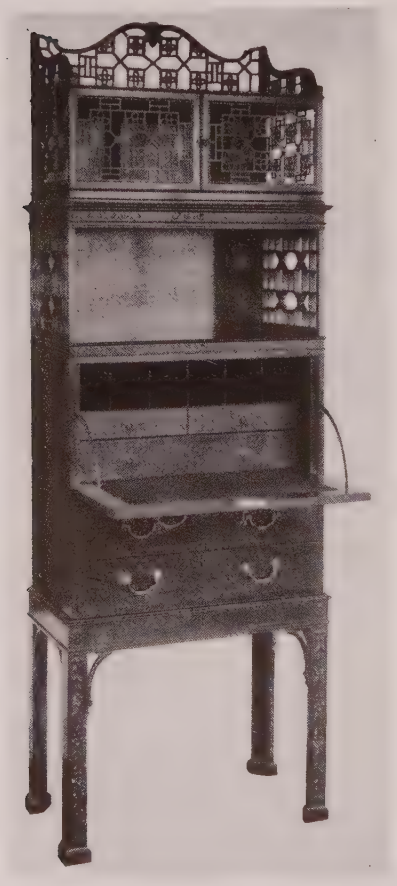
encountered another within a year. Both were incomplete, yet the one possessed what the other lacked in each case. Some device appears to be necessary here to maintain the opened flaps in a horizontal position, but no signs of any such contrivance are evident. In the second example a somewhat clumsy attempt to secure this support had been made with brass chains, but they were unsatisfactory and in the way of the person using the desk. There are several peculiarities in the one shown here. There is a flap at the back which can be lowered so that two people can use the bureau at the same time. The front writing bed pulls forward, and is cut out on the right-hand side, possibly to accommodate a floor lamp or tall candle-stand. The upper stretcher has an upward projecting rail on which ran two drawers, one at each end, with semicircular fronts and centrally grooved at the bottom, but both are missing here, although present in the other desk which I saw. There are several ingenious contrivances and receptacles in this piece which a close examination of the two illustrations will dis-



The Development of the Scrutoir or Bureau. The Cabinet (19) *with Bureau Open.*

cover. The wood is a close-grained Spanish mahogany without figure.

With the early mahogany years the pedestal writing table becomes a fashionable piece in the larger houses of this period. Two examples are given in Nos. 12 and 13, both of which exhibit the influence of William Kent, and architects of his school, who were commencing, at this date, to usurp the province of the joiner in the designing of furniture. These tables must have been very costly to produce even at the time when they were made, and there are many evidences, in the rounded ends of the one and the curious plan of the other, that they were designed with very little knowledge of the possibilities or the limitations of timber.



The Development of the Scrutoir or Bureau. (20) *Rare Secretaire Cabinet of Early Chippendale Period, c.* 1750. (*Capt. The Hon. Sir John H. Ward, K.C.V.O.*)

Another of these elaborate tables, certainly more rare than beautiful, is shown in No. 14, where there is a key-patterned frieze similar in design to No. 21, below which are heavy trusses, or pilasters. Here is the definite sacrifice of proportion and beauty to elaboration, which distinguishes so much of the architect-designed furniture of this period.

In houses of more modest character the bureau still retained its favour, but was more generally combined with the cabinet or the bookcase than before. No. 15 is a good type of the bureau-cabinet of 1730–40, with solid panelled doors above, behind which are divisions for books and papers. A somewhat later

fashion is the substitution of glass, secured with putty or beads in a built-up lattice-work, as in No. 16. This piece has the early type of rosetted handle with pierced brass backplate. A more elaborate version of the same form is illustrated in No. 17, where the fall of the bureau is supported on two small drawers. The interior fitments here are exceptionally choice and elaborate, and the general design, especially of the upper part, suggests the architect rather than the joiner.

Two views, open and closed, and a large-scale illustration of the pediment, are shown of what is, possibly, the finest, and certainly the most characteristic of all the examples in this chapter (No. 18). The upper part has been made especially for the display of china, as the doming of each compartment precludes its use as a bookcase. This cabinet is in the early style of the Chippendale school, and the care and attention which has been bestowed on apparently trifling

The Development of the Scrutoir or Bureau. (21) *Mahogany Writing Table with Extension Flaps, c.* 1770.

details is amazing. In the doors the two escutcheons balance, but are in reverse, which has entailed a separate modelling and casting. The

framings are veneered with finely figured mahogany, cross-banded and mitred at the corners. The pediment is one of the most successful, and the most unusual, examples of choice designing which I have had the good fortune to encounter.

The two views of No. 19 show the Hepplewhite version of the same form, similar in general form, but widely different in character and detail when closely examined. The construction of the fall, which is not apparent in the illustration, for obvious reasons, is peculiar, yet according to the rules laid down by Thomas Sheraton in his "Drawing Book." The flap is formed of a number of narrow pieces of deal only 3 inches in width, which are glued together, in tongue-

The Development of the Scrutoir or Bureau. (22) *A Secretaire Writing Table probably made for the use of an estate steward; c.* 1770. (*J. Dupuis Cobbold, Esq., D.L.*)

and-groove joints, without end clamps. The shrinkage, therefore, is diminished, when compared with a single slab of wood, and there

is not the usual ugly overhang of the clamps at top and bottom which any such shrinkage entails.

To the early Chippendale period belongs the small, upright, secretaire cabinet, No. 20. For sheer minuteness and intricate perfection of workmanship I know of no parallel to this little piece. There are three very shallow drawers, one below the upper stage of the two open-latticed doors, one just above the secretaire, and the third in the stand. It is impossible to do justice to the miniature character of the carving in an illustration to the scale of the one here ; a magnifying glass is necessary to examine the actual piece properly. Quality of this kind is quite beyond the means of the average collector—in fact, even if the purse be adequate, such a piece, without extraordinary luck, is rarely met with at the present day. Price has no

The Development of the Scrutoir or Bureau. The Table (22) *Shown Open.*

relation at all when furniture of this excellence can be acquired. For this reason, and there may be others, its illustration in a book

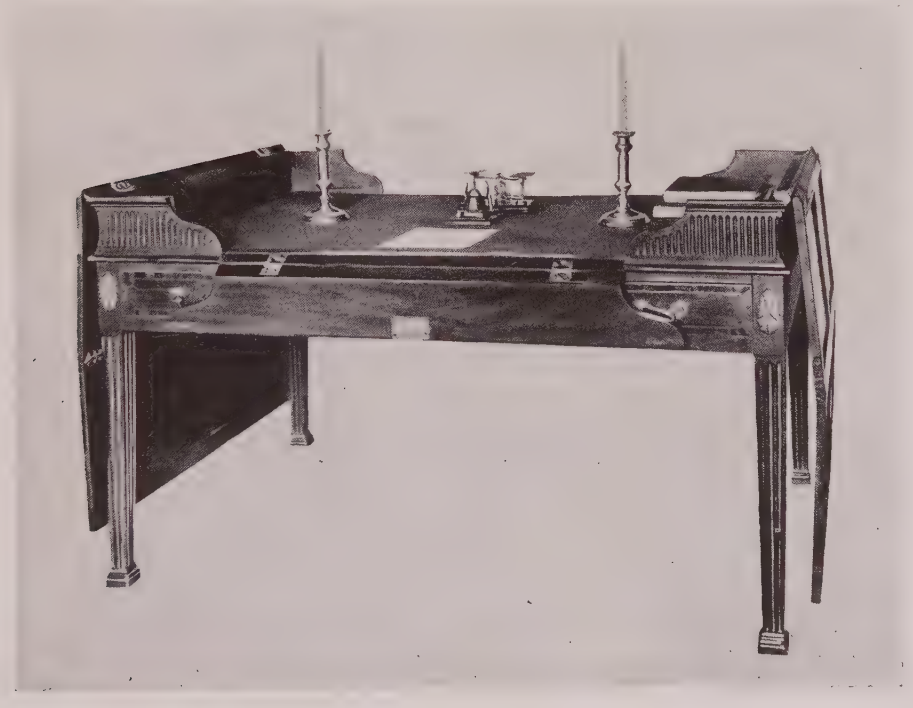
of this character is utterly indefensible. That is why, without any attempt at excuse, I have put it in.

Many of the elaborate writing tables of the later eighteenth century, especially those which are joiner-designed, are notable additions to the history of English furniture. No. 21 has pull-out flaps at each end which extend the effective length of the top to nearly 9 feet. There are eighteen drawers in this table, nine on each side, those in the frieze being made with side-overhang of the fronts to mask the opening joints, all covered with the Grecian key-pattern and carved pateræ. The locks are of Bramah's make, with the usual projecting nozzles, but here made so small that they are contained in the centre of the middle rosettes on each drawer. Each pedestal is in two parts—that is, with separate plinth—behind the framing of

The Development of the Scrutoir or Bureau. (23) *Mahogany Steward's Table of the Adam Period, c.* 1770.

which is an ingenious arrangement of screwed feet designed to adapt the table, which is of formidable weight, to an uneven floor.

An unusual form of secretaire-table is illustrated in No. 22, the operation of which can be seen quite clearly in the two views here. Tables of this kind appear to have been made for the use of estate stewards or bailiffs, to hold maps or plans, and with separate compartments, each with a lid, to hold money or notes, on quarter or rent days. I have seen several in the stewards' rooms in large houses, and there is no reason to regard them as pieces banished from the more important apartments. No. 23 has no function, apparently, other than to contain estate plans; it is certainly not a convenient writing table, and the heavy double-hinged flaps have no meaning if they are not intended to cover up plans or large sheets when not in actual use.



The Development of the Scrutoir or Bureau. The Table (23) *Shown Open.*

The slope-fronted bureau declines in fashion towards the end of the eighteenth century, its place being taken by the secretaire or the

tambour writing table. The desire, in both pieces, was to secure privacy for papers without the necessity of putting them away in drawers or cupboards. The well-known, so-called, American roll-top desk is a

The Development of the Scrutoir or Bureau. (24) *The Mahogany Tambour-Fronted Writing Table of the Hepplewhite Period, c.* 1780. (*Victoria and Albert Museum.*)

good example of the tambour. A number of narrow strips, sometimes square in section, but more often moulded, are glued down on a

piece of stout linen or canvas, to form a rolling shutter. The table is made with quadrant ends, as in No. 24, in the grooves of which the shutter runs, corresponding grooves being provided behind the pigeon-holes for it when the table is opened. An alternative method is shown in No. 25, where the tambour disappears under the two

The Development of the Scrutoir or Bureau. (25) *Mahogany "Pull-Over" Tambour Table of* 1780 *Type with Rising, or "Harlequin," Nest of Pigeon-Holes.* (*C. H. F. Kinderman, Esq.*)

drawers and when drawn up pulls right over the table. The box containing the pigeon-holes and small drawers is pressed down on a

spring, when the table is closed, and flies upwards when a catch is released. It is from this action of jumping up, that furniture of this kind gets its name of "harlequin," by which it was known at the period when it was made. Good examples of these tambour tables are now somewhat rare, but, as some compensation for their scarcity, they are not unreasonably expensive, when found. They are very dainty and decorative pieces as a rule, and ideal for feminine use.

The Development of the Scrutoir or Bureau. (26) *The Enclosed Combination Type of Table, c.* 1790. (*C. H. F. Kinderman, Esq.*)

One other type, which is more frequently found as a combination dressing and wash cabinet than as a writing table, is given in No. 26. Here the top opens from the middle as two boxes, which contain

receptacles for stationery. The box at the back springs upwards, harlequin-fashion, as in No. 25. The cupboard below, with its shutter-front, suggests that this kind of table was made for the bedroom.

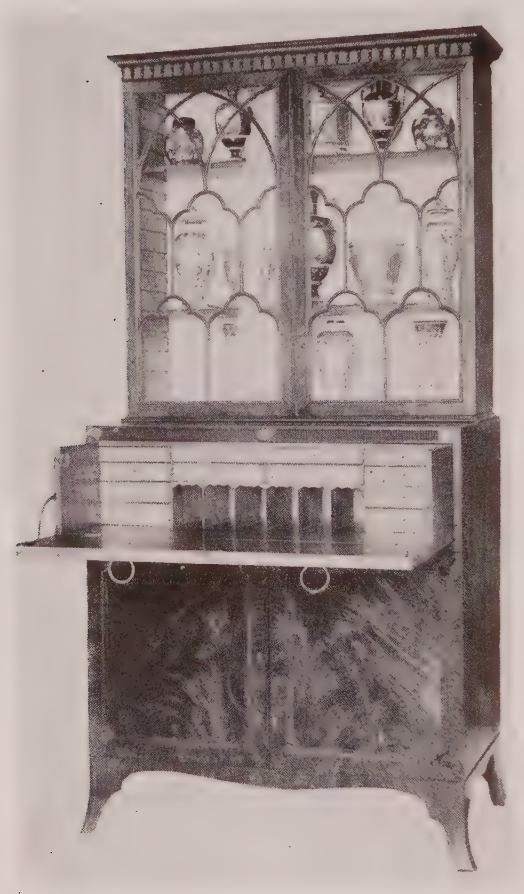
Another essentially feminine type of writing table is the "kidney" form, as in No. 27. Original tables of this form are rare, but have been extensively copied. They are charming pieces for the drawing-room or boudoir. The well-known "Carlton House" table appears to have been based on this model.

Two further varieties of writing cabinet, Nos. 28 and 29, are illustrated in conclusion of this review. The first, the pull-out secretaire with hinged fall-front, is still fairly common, and some of these pieces, especially when of small size, are often exceedingly charming. They possess the advantage of being less expensive than

The Development of the Scrutoir or Bureau. (27) *The "Kidney"-Shaped Writing Table with Lifting Slope, c.* 1780. (*Sir Leicester Harmsworth, Bart.*)

the bureau, probably for two reasons, (1) that they exist in greater numbers, and (2) that when closed they are not as decorative. The fall-front, being generally made to simulate two drawers, always

makes the lower part appear disproportionately high, but as a secretaire, in my judgment, should be left open (they become mere hiding-places for lumber when kept closed), this drawback is not as serious as would be supposed. It is, nevertheless, one of the objections which are frequently taken to the secretaire type of cabinet.



The Development of the Scrutoir or Bureau. (28) *The Pull-Out Secretaire Cabinet of c.* 1790 *Type.*

The second form, the cylinder-fronted writing cabinet, is now rare, and I have never seen one of eighteenth-century date without an upper part, whereas chests of drawers fitted with pull-out secretaires are not uncommon. Fig. 29 is a good example of the cylinder form in a satinwood cabinet decorated with painted garlands and borders of flowers. Behind the cylinder is the familiar arrangement of small drawers and pigeon-holes. The cylinder front has one annoying little habit of picking up papers and carrying them behind the pigeon-holes, when thrown back. I remember one instance where the presence of papers was only discovered when the cylinder refused to revolve, and, on taking out the back, the accumulation of years, which even included cheques, was discovered. As a slight compensation,

these cylinder bureaux may prove a treasure-trove to the purchaser, especially if among his hobbies is included the collecting of letters and other papers of the years long gone by.

The Development of the Scrutoir or Bureau. (29) *The Cylinder-Fronted Bookcase Cabinet of c.* 1790. (*C. H. F. Kinderman, Esq.*)

CHAPTER VI

WOOD PANELLINGS FOR THE OLD-WORLD HOUSE

WE are so accustomed, at the present day, to wainscottings of wood, that it is difficult to imagine the long and arduous process which was necessitated, in the Middle Ages, with the primitive wood-working methods then in vogue, before the oak of the park or the forest could be resolved into a covering for the walls of rooms in the houses of that period. The tree had to be felled, barked, sawn into planks with the aid only of the pit-saw, stacked and seasoned, and then constructed, in mortised-and-tenoned framing, with panels riven from the solid timber and dubbed smooth with the adze, before panellings were possible. This was a task not to be undertaken lightly, and in the generality of houses, prior to the accession of the Tudors—where considerations of defence were of primary importance, those of comfort only in secondary degree and in peaceful times or localities—it is not remarkable that such an expenditure of time and labour was rarely considered worth the while. Clerical houses and establishments, which aggrandised much of the skill and practically all of the culture of this time, preferred hangings of arras tapestry, for the covering of bare walls, to panellings of wood, and in churches and cathedrals—where tapestry was interdicted, for many reasons—the walls were broken up too much by windows, columns, and irregularities of surface to permit of panellings.

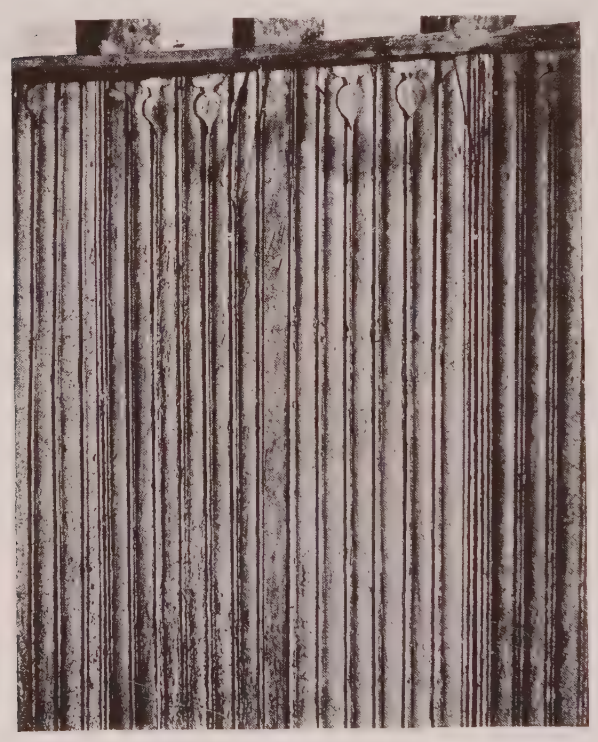
Plantagenet dwellings ranged from the castle of stone, built to withstand attack by armed force, to the farmhouse of timber and plaster, for the yeoman class. In rich counties, such as Norfolk and Suffolk, the peasantry were also housed in cottages of oak and plaster,

often decorated with a wealth of carving, in verge-board, wall-plate, corner-post and window-mullion, or with modelled devices in the exterior plasterwork. This was by no means general, however; the poorer counties housed the tillers of the soil in rude hovels. These have nearly all disappeared long since, owing to their temporary character. Here and there, as in the rural districts of Kent, solitary survivals are to be found which may date from the early fifteenth century, but the circumstances which have caused them to persist are so exceptional that the working-class house of this period must be considered as almost non-existent at the present day.

Stone, timber (generally oak), and plaster, were the English building materials of the Middle Ages; brick, although known in Roman times, were exceptional prior to the days of the Tudors. In the castles erected for defence, in Norman and Plantagenet days, the walls of the rooms inside showed the rough stone of which the castle itself was built. In the female apartments, hangings of tapestry or needlework masked the bareness, but in the other quarters the rough-quarried stone was left exposed. The times were too uncertain and troublous for any degree of what we now regard as comfort to be viewed other than as a sign of effeminacy. A great noble, such as Warwick the King-maker, would call on the looms of Flanders or the weavers of Italy to furnish his castle of Middleham or his London palace, but this would be the exception, even among the wealthy. The yeoman's house showed the timber studding, with its plaster filling, both on the inside and out, perhaps relieved by crude wall-paintings, or some such attempt at decoration. Colchester Museum possesses several examples of these early wall-paintings, which seem to show that this form of decoration may have been general, especially as, with demolition, these paintings would be exceedingly liable to destruction, and few would survive. Covered with later distemper or paint, their presence would not be suspected, beneath many coats of whitewash, in the same way as panellings would be. Of the examples which exist, at Colchester and elsewhere, none are known which can be referred, with certainty, to the fifteenth century. True, they may have perpetuated a much older art, but for this theory there is no

reliable evidence. One thing is certain, however: wainscottings of wood were practically unknown in Gothic times in England. It is not that the necessary skill to construct them was absent; there are ample evidences, in church woodwork and in the screens of the Great Halls which date from this period, to negative any such idea promptly: it was simply that the fashion had not arisen, or that the necessary time and trouble was not regarded as worth the while in the case of secular dwellings.

We may regard wood panellings, in the houses of the laity, as an innovation of the Tudor period. The Great Hall screens, of which Gothic examples still exist (one in the Victoria and Albert Museum, which may be regarded as typical of its time, is shown here on the next page), are apparent exceptions, but such screens, although they may be classed with panellings, are not true wainscottings, the walls in the Great Halls for which they were made being left bare, or hung with tapestries, but never panelled.



Oak Tongue-and-Groove Wainscotting Moulded with Linen-Fold Pattern. Late Fifteenth Century.

This archæological dissertation is necessary if one is to understand the genesis of many of the types of panellings which are illustrated in this chapter, and also the factors which caused each to evolve in its turn. There are three which are essentially early

Fragment of a Great Hall Screen Reconstructed. At the Top of each Panel is Late Fifteenth Century Tracery; below is a Shield and Three Varieties of the Linen-Fold Device.

Tudor in inception, and at the same time are almost coeval. These are: (1) The "linen-fold"*; (2) the parchemin or vine pattern; and

* The linen-fold, if we regard as such the earliest type, which has no resemblance to the folding of linen, may date as early as the mid-fifteenth century.

(3) the Renaissance carved panel, where the design generally springs from a central cartouche. The tomb of Henry VII. in Westminster Abbey may be regarded as, perhaps, the earliest exposition of this Italian style in England. The work of Pietro Torrigiano—or Peter Torrisany, as he was known in this country at the time—an Italian soldier of fortune, this tomb marks the period when the first tide of the Renaissance swept over England, gradually submerging all the Gothic traditions which had persisted, as the national style, for nearly four hundred years. That

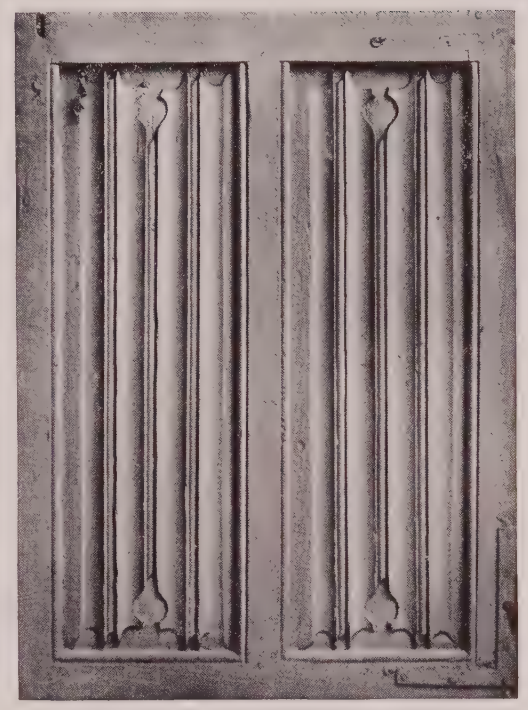
Oak Linen-Fold Panelling, showing the Construction. The Panels are Cut with a Rebate at Top and Bottom and Overhang the Rails. Late Fifteenth Century.

Torrigiano brought with him to England many of his countrymen is undoubted,* but it is questionable whether the new manner was not

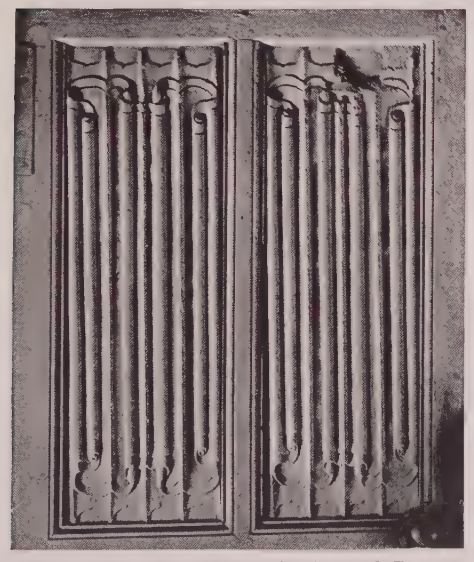
* See the third chapter of the "Memoirs of Benvenuto Cellini" (Roscoe's translation) for a contemporary account of Torrigiano, and by a renowned craftsman.

introduced, almost simultaneously, into Sussex and Devonshire by Frenchmen from Languedoc or Touraine. The royal patronage of the new style, and for a work as important as the Westminster Abbey tomb, must have had an enormous influence on its rise in favour and almost instantaneous adoption as the national style of England.

I am inclined to regard the linen-fold as an English device entirely, and one which originates in a perfectly logical manner. It may be interesting to trace its development briefly. Several ingenious theories have been advanced as to the inspiration of the motive itself. By some it is thought to be copied from the curling of a parchment leaf, such as was used to glue on the backs of oak panels intended for painting or gesso decoration. There is no doubt that parchment, from its greasy nature, would not adhere readily or well, and would be likely to curl up at the edges, but there are three grave objections to this theory,



Linen-Fold Panelling. Simple Type.



Linen-Fold Panelling. Elaborated Type.

ingenious as it may be. In the first place no linen-fold panel copies parchment in the way it would curl if imperfectly glued to a panel; secondly, it is only the later development of the device which bears any resemblance to the folding of linen, proving that it did not originate in this way; and thirdly, there would be no reason to copy

The French Type of Linen-Fold with Renaissance Panels above and Semi-Balusters applied to the Muntins. The Type which is Found in Devon and Somerset. Early Sixteenth Century.

a decorative motive from a source as crude as this when the carvers had all the wealth of the Gothic to draw upon, and from which source

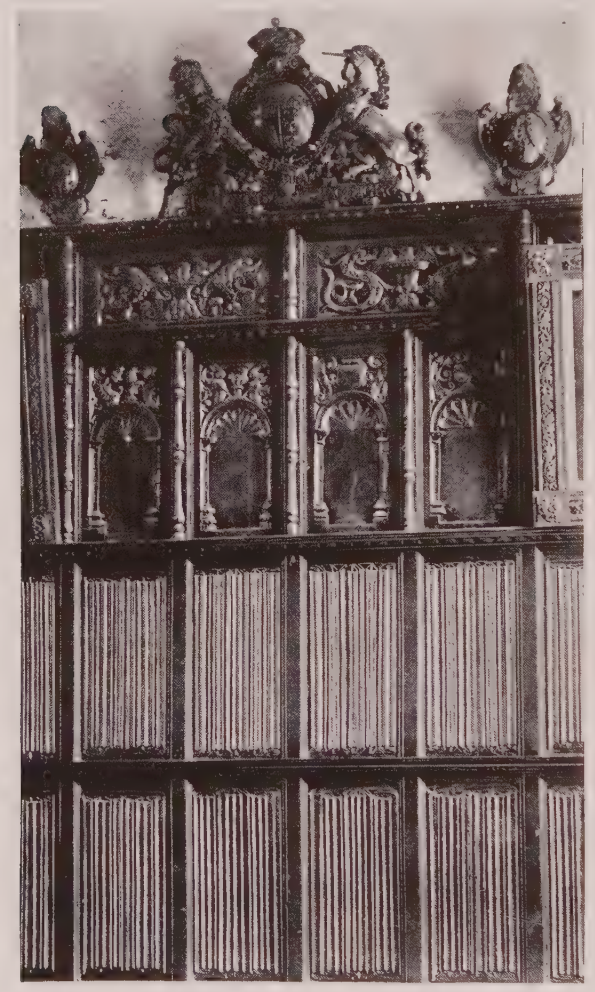
something new could, and would, have been evolved had decorative novelty been the sole aim. It is more logical to look for a definite and useful reason for the origin and the evolution of the linen-fold panel, and the theory stated here has, at all events, a practical basis.

The earliest panels which are known to us are of riven oak, dubbed smooth with the adze on the exposed face, and left rough from the riving-iron or " thrower " behind. It would be discovered, especially when the timber was not thoroughly seasoned, that panels fashioned in this manner would have a marked tendency to warp and split. Whether by accident or design, it was found that a panel left with a middle rib or ridge, formed by chamfering away the wood from a central vertical line, would be much less likely to twist, owing to the stiffening properties which this rib would give. If the panel were intended to be housed in a framing-groove, this chamfering away

Oak Linen-Fold Panelling with Lay-Panels above Carved with Renaissance Ornament. Mid-Sixteenth Century.

from a central rib would also be a quicker method than smoothing all over with the adze, and would, therefore, be readily adopted. The

next development would be to turn this rib to the front and to make a decorative feature of it. There are several church doors in Suffolk (Boxford is an example) where the panels are tall and narrow, and ridged in this way, without cross-rails, housed into the framings at the top, bottom, and sides only.



Linen-Fold Panelling in the Vicars' Hall, Exeter. The Folding of Soft Linen is Imitated Here. Late Sixteenth Century.

A panel with a single central rib, or with several, as the desire for decoration grows (or, in other words, one which is vertically moulded), cannot be inserted into grooves in its framing, especially at the top and bottom, without cutting the ribbing away either by a rebate or a chamfer, in order to form a tongue. Even this would only make a good joint, into which damp could not enter, if the inside edges of the framing rails were left without moulding or bevel, so that the rebated profile of the vertical moulding could abut squarely. To mould, or even to chamfer the inside edges of the rails, would mean a bad joint where

the top and bottom of the vertical moulding of the panel would overhang. In the two panels shown here on page 120, it will be noticed that the linen-fold does overhang at the bottom in this way. To overcome this defect, the obvious device would be to make a long chamfer on the panel, bringing it to a " feather-edge," but this would mutilate the pattern. The considered method of surmounting the difficulty would be to do just what the old craftsmen did, carve

Two Versions of the Parchemin or Vine Panel. An Alternative Method to the Linen-Fold of Using the Panel-Rib as an Ornamental Device.

the linen-fold moulding in a series of voluted patterns, at top and bottom, cutting away to the ground so as to form a proper tongue

which would make a workman-like joint in the groove. These devices soon began to multiply, dictated, in part, by the section of the vertical moulding itself, but more often by the individual whim of the carver. Of these caprices, several examples are given in this chapter. It is worthy of note that only at a late stage does this moulded panel begin to resemble the folding of starched linen. The name of "linen-

Early Sixteenth-Century Renaissance Panelling inspired from French Sources, 1520. (*Victoria and Albert Museum.*)

fold," therefore, could not have been original. That it, or some other name with a similar meaning, originates at an early period is

indicated by many examples, such as the wainscotting in the Vicars' Hall at Exeter (shown on page 124); there in thes eries of panels the folding of *soft* linen or cloth is deliberately imitated. This is late sixteenth-century work,* and shows, therefore, the linen-fold pattern at an advanced stage in its development.

The earliest linen-fold, as applied to the decoration of the covering woodwork of interior walls, appears to have originated as a true wainscotting, something like what we know, at the present day, as match-boarding. Examples are rare, as the fashion must have been very exceptional. One is shown here on page 118 which still exists at Lavenham in Suffolk. The vertical strips of wood are tongued and grooved together, just in the same way as match-boarding is, and the vertical moulding serves to hide the joints between the sections. The boarding is nailed to the wall, and kept from buckling by a rebated capping-rail at the top only. At the bottom is neither skirting nor batten. I have seen fragments of what may be earlier wainscotting than this in some of the Kentish yeomen's houses; there the method is even more primitive. A number of narrow boards are nailed to the wall without any tongue-and-groove joint, each piece overlapping the one next to it, in the manner which the shipwright knows as "clinker-building." In the Victoria and

Oak Panelling of Interlaced Arcaded Pattern. Cheshire and Derbyshire Type. Early Seventeenth Century.

* The arcaded superstructure is nearly a century later then the linen-fold panels below.

Oak Panelling with Carved Frieze and Pilasters. The Rich Type of the South-West, c. 1600.

Albert Museum is an exterior door, from a house at Clare in Suffolk, which is constructed in this way, with overlapping boarding clout-nailed to a stout framing behind.

While it would be hazardous, in the absence of any direct evidence which decorative detail, for example, might afford, to assign an exact date to any examples of this "clinker" or lapped wainscotting, there is no doubt that it is early in type, and was, in all probability, the first primitive method adopted in England of covering a bare interior wall with wooden wainscotting.

The fragment of the Great Hall screen shown here on page 119 is constructed in the same way as the wall panelling of the next century, allowance being made for the fact that it is double-sided and for the heavy scantling of the timbers which this has entailed. In spite of the somewhat barbarous reconstruction which has done so much to ruin its original character, here are three examples of the linen-fold, prior to the sixteenth

century, which show the device in anything but an embryonic form. Some consideration must be paid to the fact that this is a Devonshire screen from a county which was almost supreme,

Oak Panelling of Kentish Type. Paint Stripped from Two Panels only. Early Seventeenth Century.

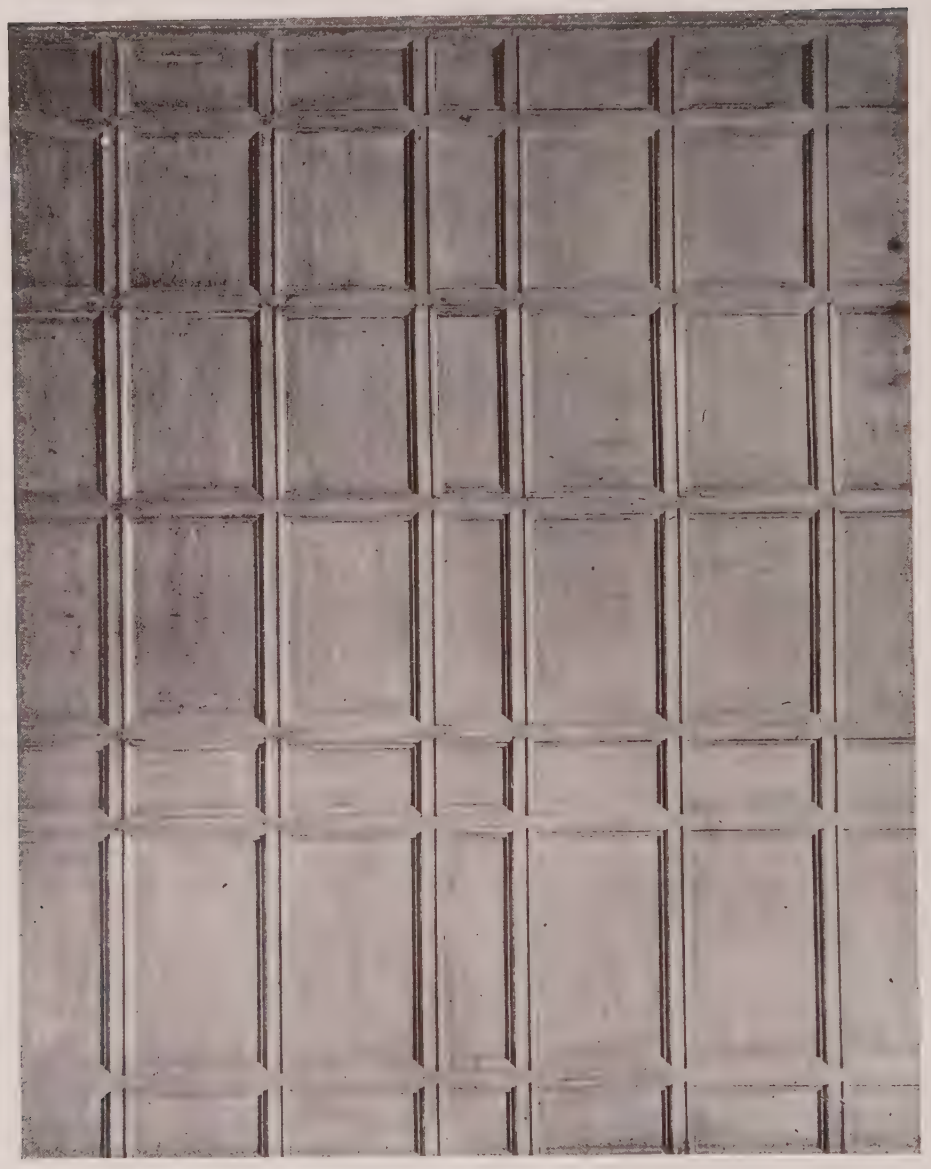
at this period, for its fine woodwork. Here are the three phases of the linen-fold pattern on the one panel, from the simple

single-rib up to the more ornate version which carries us well into the sixteenth century. The flat character of the folding indicates an early date even were the Gothic tracery at the panel-head not present. On page 120 is a portion of actual panelling which is still prior to the sixteenth century, but this is an isolated fragment and was never a true wainscotting. The crude overhang on the lower rail is never found after about 1530, when the fashion began to arise of constructing wall-panellings. The sixteenth-century linenfold, both in simple and ornate kinds, is illustrated on page 121, which shows how the ground is cut away to permit of the insertion of the panel in its groove without overhang at the top and bottom.

Possibly one of the earliest types of wall-panelling (which at the same time is, perhaps, the most ornate) is where the so-called linenfold is combined with the Italian Renaissance ornament introduced by Torrigiano and his school, such as in the fragment illustrated here on page 122. This may date from the first quarter of the sixteenth century, and had the panelling in the recently opened Cardinal's "Lodgynges" at Hampton Court been of Wolsey's time, or even original to the Palace itself, it would, doubtless, have been of a pattern similar to the example shown here. Unfortunately for guide-book accuracy, some authorities are too prone to accept woodwork discovered behind paint or wall-paper, which has been buried, demonstrably, for a generation or two, as original to the place where it is found. It would have been of the greatest interest to have discovered, in Wolsey's old Palace, woodwork or furniture of his time, but this panelling is later even than Henry VIII., and is composed of fragments brought from elsewhere (probably from Oxfordshire) fitted up with little or no regard to the shapes of rooms themselves.

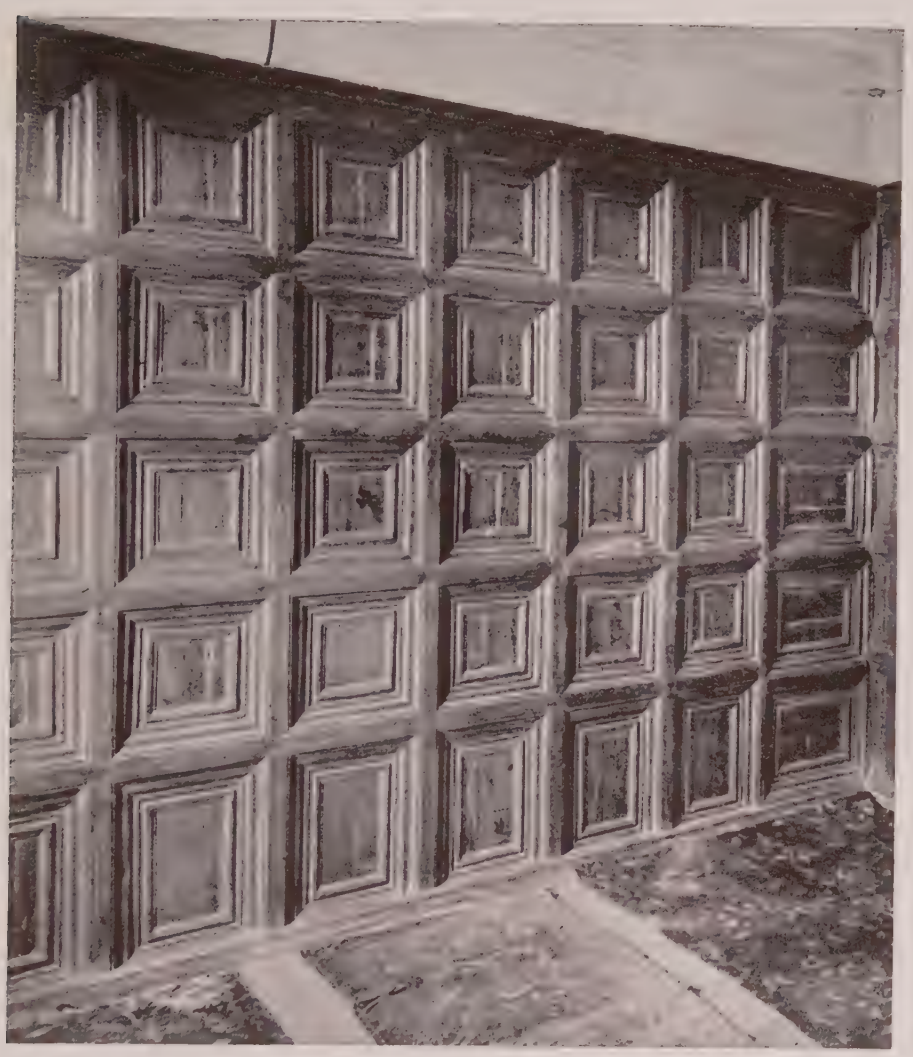
Before leaving this early example, it may be pointed out that the device of the lower panels bears little or no resemblance to the folding of linen or parchment. It represents the highest development of its period, and is the work of a carver skilled in his craft. The semi-octagonal balusters, applied to the vertical muntins, is French rather than Italian in inspiration. This fragment bears a strong similarity in character to much of the original woodwork still to be found in some

Oak Panelling from the Palace at Bromley-by-Bow. The Device of Alternating Broad and Narrow and Tall and Short Panels is Usually Found in Home County Work. Date 1605.



The East Anglian Version of the Bromley-by-Bow Panelling. Here the Upright and Lay Panels are Doubled and the Small Square Panels are on Every Fourth Tier only. Early Seventeenth Century.

of the old houses in the ancient town of Rye, and probably originates from this quarter.



The Welsh-Bordering-County Type of Oak Panelling with Framings and Mouldings of Heavy Section. Early Seventeenth Century.

A closer approximation to the folding or creasing of stiff parchment or starched linen is to be seen in the next illustration on page 123,

where the upper panels have also the Renaissance ornament, but are placed lengthwise, running across two of the vertical panels below. This is the East Anglian type, somewhat coarse, yet with a peculiar vigour of handling which is unmistakable. The last phase of the linen-fold is to be found at Exeter (page 124) and in the first two of the Hampton Court rooms ("My Lorde Cardinall's Lodgynges") entering from the picture gallery. Here the folding of soft linen is simulated with considerable fidelity. While generically Tudor, this type may be more properly, and closely, described as early Elizabethan.

Whether the decorative possibilities of the linen-fold were quickly exhausted, or possibly as an alternative method of using this central stiffening-rib, other patterns were devised shortly afterwards which developed nearly on parallel lines. The method adopted was to open out the central ridge so as to form, in combination with other panels, a number of ogival devices in diapered patterns.

This is the so-called "parchemin" or "vine" panel, which, although almost contemporary, is distinctly rarer than the linen-fold. At Boughton Malherbe, near Maidstone, is a room completely wainscotted with these "vine" panels, known as such by reason of the grape and vine-leaf being frequently introduced as a subsidiary decoration in the spaces left by the radiating ogival ribs. Two examples are shown on page 125 which indicate the type. There is a rare variation of the pattern, where the ogival ribs interlace, but this is highly exceptional.

The Renaissance Italian ornament appears to have permeated English woodwork very thoroughly, especially in the counties south of the Humber. Whether this was due, directly, to the influence of Torrigiano, or whether he brought with him a considerable number of his countrymen, Florentines who had studied with Michelangelo, and settled in various parts of the southern counties of England, it is impossible to determine. Certainly in the Wolsey ceilings at Hampton Court, and in wood- and stonework at Christchurch Priory, Ely, and elsewhere, are evidences not merely of a particular style, but also of a definite hand. The Italian Renaissance ornament had strongly influenced the artistic development of the

Netherlands and the French cities bordering on the Loire, long before England was affected in any way. The new manner appears in this

East Anglian Oak Panelling Types. Early Seventeenth Century.

Each Panel Moulding here is completely Mitred and Applied, with Slight Projection.

The Panels here are "Fielded" without Chamfers. The Edges of the Panels are Moulded.

country not from one source merely—from the fountain-head, Italy, —but from three, if not four, and the difference in the transmutation of the Renaissance ornament through the channels of France and the Low Countries is very noticeable.

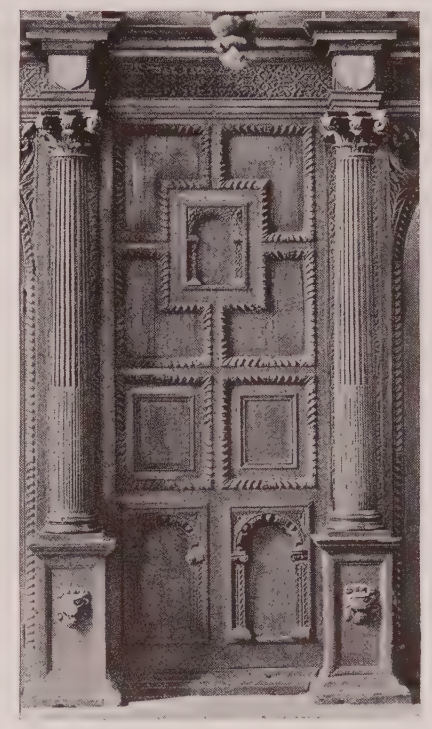
Perhaps the best example of the pure Italian Renaissance ornament in oak panelling of the sixteenth century, certainly the most complete of its kind, is to be found in the Waltham Room now in

the Victoria and Albert Museum. Perhaps by reason of its unique character this wainscotting has been extensively illustrated. One section is given on page 126 as a record of panelling of the first half of the sixteenth century to complete this series.

The seventeenth-century panelling types are too numerous for anything beyond the briefest notice here. One page 127 is the interlaced pattern of Cheshire and Derbyshire. That on page 128 shows the rich woodwork of the south-western counties, Somerset and Devon, where the Italian manner is superimposed on that of France. On page 129 is the Kentish wainscotting, somewhat crude in type, with moulded vertical muntins butt-jointed into cross-rails scratch-beaded at the top and stop-chamfered at the bottom. That from the old palace at Bromley-by-Bow, with its arrangement of framing on a large panel with smaller ones (page 131) and another version from Billesley Manor (page 132), show the Home County and East Anglian types. Shropshire, Cheshire, and Herefordshire appear to have preferred the heavy framing and panel mouldings as on page 133, and on page 135 two further types of East Anglian framed panelling are given.

The "Inner Frame" or Strap Panel in Two Tiers. Hereford and Shropshire Type. This Panelling is Exceptional in being made of Walnut. Early Seventeenth Century.

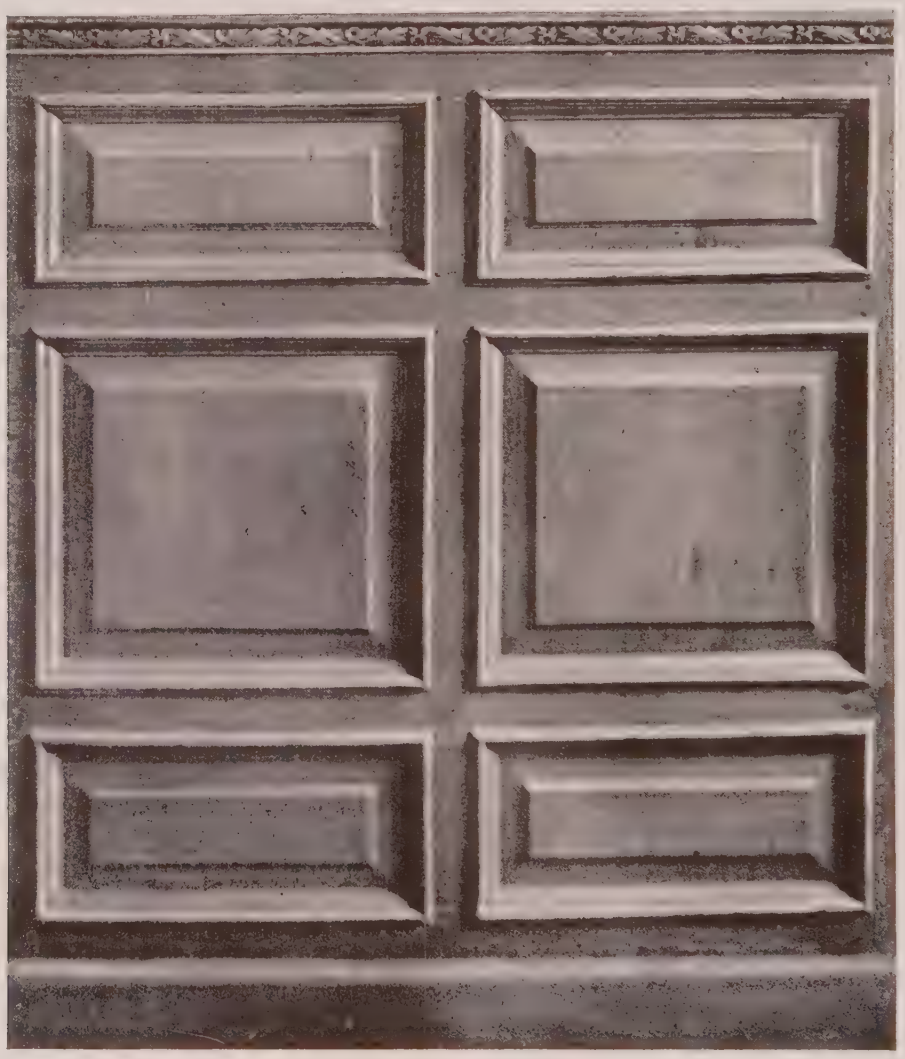
A method of framing one panel within four others in a kind of key-pattern—what is known, technically, as inner-frame panelling—comes into vogue shortly after about 1620, but only begins to be general after about 1660. On page 136 is a Herefordshire example, exceptional in being of walnut instead of the usual oak, and on this page is the elaborated version of the same fashion.



"Inner-Frame" Panelling of Elaborated Type. Early Seventeenth Century.

Thus far, all the panellings shown here have one characteristic in common—the area of the panels is small. Jointing, which involved the use of glue or other adhesive, was not encouraged by the Tudor or Stuart joiner, and the cutting of oak, by the method known as quartering, meant that no single piece could be of greater width than about one-third of the diameter of the log, allowing for the cutting out of the heart-wood and the squaring up of the trunk after removing the bark. After about 1670 the large panel came into fashion, probably at the dictates of architects, who, knowing little of the properties and limitations of English oak, had no regard for the scruples of joiners trained in a careful and traditional school. On page 138 is the commencement of the large-panel fashion, and in the Clifford's Inn Room we have the mode at its zenith—that is, as far as oak panelling is concerned. With the eighteenth century we find wainscotting of painted deal taking the place of the earlier oak, perhaps not to the advantage of English craftsmanship, as this painting permitted, at a later date, of the use of composition enrichments disguised as carving.

Deal had been known and used for panellings early in the Stuart period, and although the red deal of that date was of beautiful quality,



Heavy-Frame Panelling with Bolection Mouldings and "Fielded" Panels with Chamfered Borders. Essex Type of c. 1670–80.

there can be no question as to its inferiority to oak. Its comparative rarity, however, is shown by the fact that these deal-panelled rooms

were the more highly prized, being repeatedly mentioned in the inventories of the period, whereas wainscottings of oak are rarely referred to. They copied, in every instance, the small-panel fashion of their time, and, with later "japanning" or graining, have often masqueraded as oak. At Parnham Park, in Dorsetshire, was—possibly still is—a good example of this deal panelling, in what was known as the King's Room.

While these panellings of fine red deal were intended, in the original instance, to be painted, a very charming fashion has arisen,

The Introduction of the Large Oak Panel. The Clifford's Inn Room now in the Victoria and Albert Museum. Date about 1686.

during recent years, of stripping the old paint and leaving them in the natural wood. Numberless coats of oil and lead colour, together

Detail of Door and Panelling from the Clifford's Inn Room.

with the exclusion of light, has toned the wood to the shade of faded pencil cedar. The rooms on exhibition in the Victoria and Albert Museum have all had the paint removed in this way, and their decorative value enhanced enormously. There is an honest character in the bare wood—especially where it is of fine quality, as these old panels nearly always were—which painting disguised, without any compensating advantage. Carving being the rule at this period, and composition enrichments an abomination which, to their discredit, was an introduction of the brothers Adam in the later years of the eighteenth century, this removal of the paint exposes any imitation or defect ruthlessly. A few words may be advisable here on the subject of this stripping of paint. When the room is in fragments—

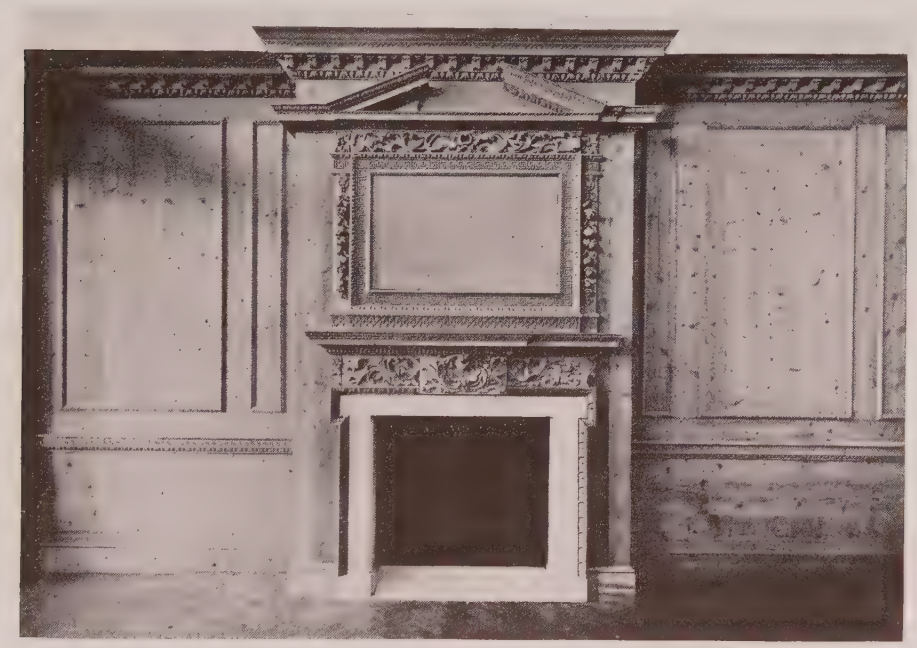
Red Deal Panelling of the Early Eighteenth Century. The Cornice is of Wood, and Surbase and Skirting of Large Projection. The Corner Beads are Carved; c. 1710.

that is, before the panels are fixed—it is possible to immerse the pieces in a bath of "pickle" (the generic name for all paint-removers),

The Pilastered Mantelpiece of c. 1730–40. *The Marble Mantel and Steel Grate are Later.*
(*Messrs. Gill and Reigate.*)

and to let time, and the stripper, do its work. This is inexpensive paint-removing. To attempt to do the same with the woodwork *in situ* (especially if paint, often a hundred years old, and in numerous coats, is to be removed from quirks and interstices of carving without the use of sharp tools which ruin the character of the work) is an exceedingly costly process. It is considerably cheaper to dismantle a fixed room, to take the panels and framings apart, even if subsequent re-making and re-fixing has to be faced, than to attempt to " pickle " it in position, especially if the room be heavily carved.

That this Georgian deal panelling was intended for painting, is proved by the fact that no attempt was ever made to cut out the knots, which have a disfiguring effect when the woodwork is stripped and left in its natural state. There are two methods of dealing with



A Fine Example of Red Deal Panelling of c. 1740. *The Dado is not Panelled. All Mouldings are Carved.*

these. The first is to cut them out and to patch with other pieces of the same wood; the second is to grain them over. The

latter is to be preferred, although such work demands a capable, and, therefore, a highly paid decorator. Patching is never satisfactory, as it is impossible to disguise the inlaid pieces, and they have always a tendency to fall out with the slightest shrinkage.

The proper treatment for these stripped deal rooms is a slight polishing with beeswax and turpentine, but it is advisable to stain them first to a cinnamon shade. This can be done with coffee, but one of the wood stains, such as Stephens make, is to be preferred, as the latter do not bleach so easily if exposed to a strong light. A good coating of size (that made by boiling down parchment cuttings is to be recommended in preference to the crude animal size used by painters) should be applied before waxing, followed by a rubbing down with glass paper or soft pumice stone.

If the room possess no picture rail, and it is desired to hang pictures in the panels (they are an invaluable adjunct), the top section of the panel moulding, if it be of the projecting or "bolection" type, can be grooved to hold the usual brass picture hooks. Where the moulding is a sunk ovolo, this is not possible, and the only method is to use a channelled rosette, preferably with a three-pin fixing. It is remarkable to note the extreme weight which a flat rosette will carry if secured by three pins, triangular fashion, as compared with the single-pin fixing of a picture hook. The pins need only be of the lightest type, such as will not damage the woodwork or leave unsightly holes if removed at any time.

Of the remaining illustrations to this chapter, on page 145 is the Morning Room at Dudley House, Park Lane, of stripped deal, beautiful in detail, shade, and texture. On page 146 is shown a typical triple window, with arch-headed centre, from No. 7, Soho Square. Known as Venetian windows at the time, the paintings of Hogarth have familiarised us with the type. They are nearly always fine both in proportion and detail.

Two characteristic six-panelled doors are given on pages 148 and 149. Both are in the Victoria and Albert Museum, where they can be examined and studied at leisure. To those who are fortunate enough to possess original examples in old houses, the advice given in

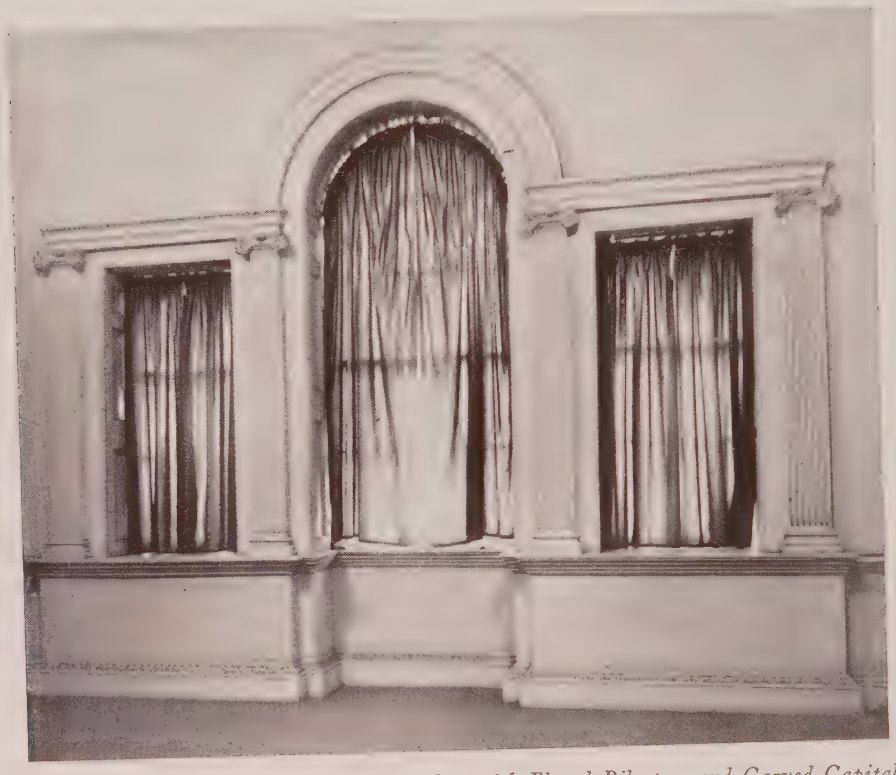
Chapter III., to substitute fine, bold box-locks of brass for the usual, but later, mortise lock, may be reiterated here. A door lock is a good honest thing, with a definite function to perform. Why hide it ?

From the foregoing, it will be seen that, with panellings for the Old-World House, we are limited to two woods, oak or red deal. If the work is to be painted, pine can be substituted for the latter. Walnut or mahogany was never used, as far as I am aware, at any period, for wainscotting, although procurable in wide boards. Exception may be made, in favour of walnut, in the instance of rare examples, such as the Banqueting Chamber at Rotherwas in Hereford (see page 136), and I have seen other panellings where walnut

The Morning Room, Dudley House, Park Lane, W. Stripped Red Deal Panelling and Pilastered Mantel, c. 1730. *(Capt. The Hon. Sir John H. Ward, K.C.V.O.)*

has been substituted for oak, but, apart from rarity, the wood has little to recommend it. Walnut is neither as durable a timber as oak

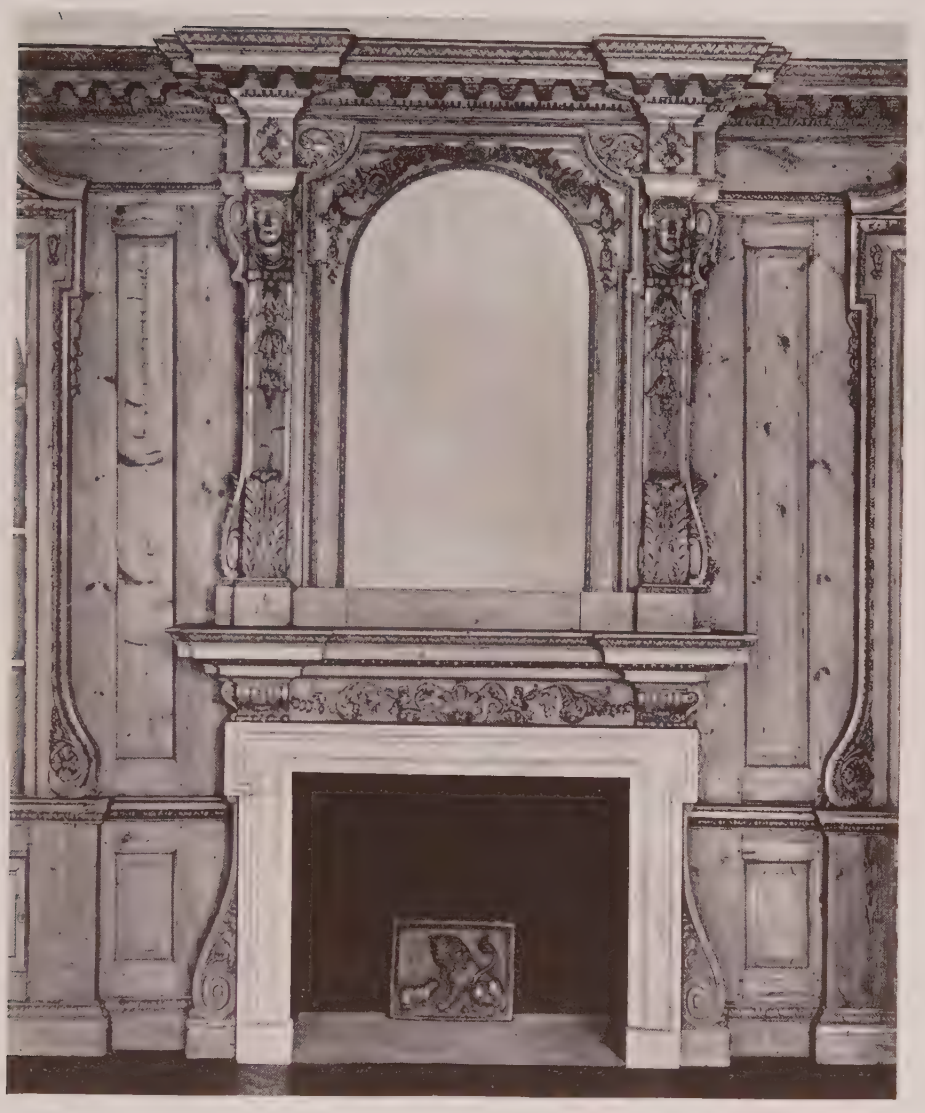
nor as decorative. Oak cut "on the quarter"—that is, with each board sawn at an acute angle with the medullary ray *—exhibits the fine



No. 7, Soho Square. A "Venetian" Window with Fluted Pilasters and Carved Capitals. The Large Projection of Surbase and Skirting should be Noted; c. 1710–20. *(Messrs. Gill and Reigate.)*

"splash" figure which many of the examples illustrated in this chapter show. Highly figured walnut is apt to look garish when used for large surfaces. Why mahogany was not used for panellings is a mystery. It is a reliable wood, perhaps the most satisfactory of all timbers in many respects, and was procurable in wide boards, free from knots, shakes, or sap. Yet Georgian wainscottings of mahogany, apparently, do not exist, and as the wood did not come into general

* The reader is referred to "Early English Furniture and Woodwork," vol. i., chap. iii., where the art of quartering oak is described and illustrated.



Overmantel and Panelling of Red Deal. On Either Side can be seen Portions of the China Niches; c. 1730. (*Victoria and Albert Museum.*)

Red Deal Panelling and Elaborate Door Head. School of James Gibbs, c. 1730. *(Victoria and Albert Museum.)*

Characteristic Six-Panelled Door of Red Deal. All Mouldings are Carved; c. 1740–50.
(*Victoria and Albert Museum.*)

use, for furniture, prior to about 1725, any panellings, if made at all, would be found between about 1730 and 1780, yet they appear to be utterly unknown. There may be two sufficient reasons for this. In the first place, mahogany was an expensive wood at the period when it became fashionable (it was actually introduced into this country and was used, sparingly, nearly a century before 1725); and secondly, the early timber was hard and sombre, almost free from figure, and therefore unsuitable for wall-panellings. I have known of instances where aromatic cedar was used for this purpose, but these are highly exceptional. At the present day there is a well-founded prejudice against the use of mahogany; it has been adopted for the fitting of public-houses and restaurants, stained to a vicious red with bichromate of potash, and "French" polished to such a degree that a room panelled in this way (I have known of several) forthwith takes on the appearance of a saloon-bar. Left without staining, merely oiled and waxed, mahogany can be a decorative wood, especially if the figure be restrained. It is difficult, therefore, to understand why it is not satisfactory for panellings, yet there is no doubt that it is rarely used. I can imagine the small-panel type of Jacobean woodwork looking very well if copied in waxed mahogany. The greatest disadvantage which mahogany possesses, to many, is not inherent to the wood itself. I refer to the attentions of the so-called "French" polisher, who will produce the horrible red colour and sticky shine found on so many of the shop-fronts of a few years ago. Shellac polishing, at its best, is far from an adornment, but it demands both time and labour if it is to be properly done. At its worst, as it usually is, it should be included in the calendar as a criminal offence.

However unconventional one may be, we are all slaves to fashion, in a greater degree than many even suspect. If decorative work of any kind is to be done in the house, there is always the idea, expressed or implied, that the money spent shall add to the value of the house itself, not only decoratively, but in pounds, shillings, and pence as well. Nor is this an unmixed evil. The following of current fashions may lead to the stereotyped, in unskilful hands, but the artist will still

evolve something notable, while apparently fettered by tradition. It is he who throws all tradition overboard, and launches on new and uncharted seas, who is doomed to shipwreck and disaster from the outset. Decoration is akin, in this, to all other arts; absolute originality is impossible, nor is such novelty to be desired. We are children of the ages, with the inheritance of thousands of years. We can add our brick or stone to the temple of the arts, which is always in the building, and it is to our credit if such be well and truly laid. But—we can no more erect a temple of our own, from foundation to coping, than we can live again our racial life from protoplasm to primates.

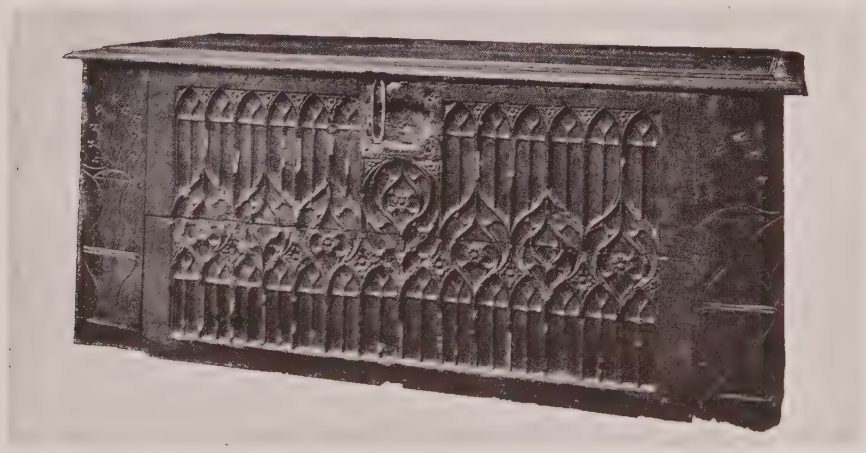
CHAPTER VII

PRE-REFORMATION GOTHIC FURNITURE

AN apology may be necessary for opening this chapter with a few dates or, perhaps, for inserting it in this book at all. With furniture of pre-Reformation period we can have here no practical concern, nor has the collector, as a rule, for the good and sufficient reason that hardly any exists. To acquire a good knowledge of English furniture, however, there is no better Pelmanic method than the evolutionary one. He who can look, with a moment's effort of the will, down the vista of the centuries, and trace development, in imagination and in memory, of things seen and studied, from type to type, is already well equipped for the road which

Oak Chest with Front Unframed, Clamped at Ends only. Carving Crude, but Characteristic of the Late Fourteenth Century in England. (Dersingham Church.)

leads to really expert knowledge. It is not enough to have a mere knowledge of dates of styles (although these are by no means unimportant or to be despised); one must know, almost at a glance, the materials, construction, and the possibilities and limitations of craftsmen of the various periods, whether such limitations be the result of imperfect methods, want of knowledge, or of a decadent art from which the former glories have departed. To the student who studies for the interest of the thing itself, as compared with that type of collector (it is assumed that the collector *is* a student, which is not always the case) who sees only rarity or value expressed in pounds, shillings, and pence or, perhaps, in dollars, there is no subject more engrossing than that of English furniture. Here is craftsmanship, frequently of the highest order, allied with fine artistic sense of creation, exercised on objects of everyday life, on the things with which we surround our waking and even our sleeping hours, which make our existence pleasurable or unbearable on our little march from cradle to grave. There is an intimacy, therefore, with old furniture which very few other "collectable" objects possess. This portrait was painted as a personal thing, to perpetuate human vanity or frailty beyond its allotted mortal span; but on this chair, and at that table, have sat



Chest-Front Carved from the Solid Slab. The Chest Itself is of Later Date. English, Late Fifteenth Century.

generations of men, women, and children. Schemes have been thought out, hopes and fears expressed, and possibly the wheel of life has spun from affluence to indigence in this panelled room. Deeds of light or darkness, romances of love, or tragedies of hate, have been enacted within these walls, which, if popularly credited with ears, have never been accused of possessing tongues.

I know of two things only which can rival old furniture or woodwork in intimacy of character, namely, old gardens and old books, and the first cannot be "collected," while the rarity value of the latter has, too frequently, buried the personal note under a mountain of money.*

After this digression, we may revert again to our dates, and see if we can bottle up a couple of centuries or more in a line or two. I

Oak Chest with Constructed Front—i.e., *Framed Up—with Applied Crocketing and Buttresses. The Bottom Rail is Missing Here. The Last Phase of the Gothic Prior to the Reformation.*

like to commence with Richard II., 1377–1400, as it was in the later years of his reign that Master Hugh Herland was commissioned to

* It is recorded that the late Mr. Locker-Lampson sent a rare book to the binders, and complained, afterwards, that the bound book "gaped." "Why," said the binder indignantly, "you have been reading it!"

begin the gigantic oak roof to Rufus's Westminster Hall, perhaps the finest triumph of English carpentry, and one which has persisted to our day, save and excepting the attention necessary, at various times, during the nineteenth century and the elaborate steel coring of the old timbers, just finished by the Office of Works after eleven years of labour. Even here the King's carpenter, who built for a thousand or more years beyond his own span of life, could not have foreseen that a tiny grub, barely one-quarter of an inch in length (*Xestobium tessellatum*, to give him his full style and dignity), multiplied in millions, would burrow into his gigantic trusses, eat away collars, principals, rafters, tie beams, hammer beams and posts, powder his Sussex oak despite the enormous size of his scantlings, and bring his mighty roof to the verge of crashing down on to the stone pavement, ninety feet below his ridge.

A Fifteenth-Century Secular Chair. The Fine Gothic Tradition is Evident Here. The Chair, as Distinct from the Church Stall or Bishop's Throne, is Exceedingly Rare at this Period.

Kings lose much of their dignity when used as milestones along the road of development of any art or craft. A handful of foreigners landing on the shores of England, bringing with them their methods and appliances, such as the Huguenots brought, in loom and shuttle, after the revocation of the Edict of Nantes and the massacre of St. Bartholomew, may have—and often did have—a greater effect on the evolution of English handicrafts than half a dozen monarchs ascending or descending the throne of England. We have little concern, therefore, with the fourth Henry, 1400–13, the fifth, 1413–22, or the sixth, 1422–61, although after Warwick the King-

maker made his last stand on Barnet Field, on behalf of the monk-king against the Yorkist Edward, on that fateful Easter Day of 1471,

Gothic Table; Post-Reformation. The Archaic Character might Suggest a Much Earlier Date, but this is Depraved Gothic.

began an era which has been described as the Golden Age of English woodwork. We shall see, in a few lines, how long this age persisted and the factors which brought it to a close.

Edward IV. reigns from 1461 to 1483; his son, king of a minute, is succeeded by his uncle, Crookback, in the same year of 1483, and with Bosworth Field the Plantagenets fall and the House of Tudor arises in 1485. Richmond's son, burly Harry, the self- and much-widowed, begins his reign in 1509, and at last we reach a king whose deeds really do matter in tracing the development of furniture and woodwork. To say that Henry's influence was bad is to state the obvious; there are only bad or passive kings as far as a nation's handicrafts are concerned.

I suppose no two acts of oppression had such a marked effect on English furniture and woodwork as the destruction of the monasteries and the debasing of the currency, two royal methods of " raising the

wind" in order to replenish a bottomless exchequer. The results of the first were immediate and pronounced, those of the second none the

Dole Cupboard or Hutch. Secular Gothic after the Dissolution.

less marked, although, perhaps, less obvious to the superficial observer. From abbey and monastery the lay brethren were driven forth "with forty shillings and a gown per man," and with them went all the lore, skill in craftsmanship, and cunning of eye and hand which had made the fifteenth century the Golden Age. Thereafter, for many years, the orfévres, lattiners, luminers, huchiers, and carvers of wood, marble, or stone, no longer fostered in the shadow of mighty abbeys, and forbidden to ply their trades elsewhere (for he who roamed from his village or town without sanction could be—and was—summarily hanged to a tree as a rogue and a masterless man), lurked as outlaws in forest or thicket, and English craftsmanship languished and almost became extinct, and never approached its former glory from that fateful year of 1536 up to the present day.

Handicrafts could not die, however, and after some years a new race of craftsmen arose, with the former fine traditions only dimly

remembered (for the persecution which drove the monks forth was accompanied by an insensate destruction which broke down their monuments in marble, stone, or wood), and the result was a crude travesty of the Gothic which, by reason of its barbarity, was long accepted as the prototype of the earlier, and infinitely finer, work.

Of this pre-Reformation woodwork some still remains in tiny churches, in chancel and rood-screen, pulpit, pew or bench, although nearly always sadly mutilated, or, what is worse, ignorantly restored. Of furniture of the same period very little exists, and that little can rarely be acquired by the collector, other than at fabulous prices. Of the pre-Reformation furniture, up to the dawn of the Renaissance in England, I have shown one or two examples, more for their educational value, or as curiosities, than as pieces which can be acquired for the furnishing of our Old-World House. Here and there the dividing-line between the Gothic and the Renaissance has been overstepped, but the purely Gothic motives persist for many years, although often depraved and half forgotten, until the full tide of the Renaissance finally submerges them at last, and no vestige remains of the glory which had gone before.

CHAPTER VIII

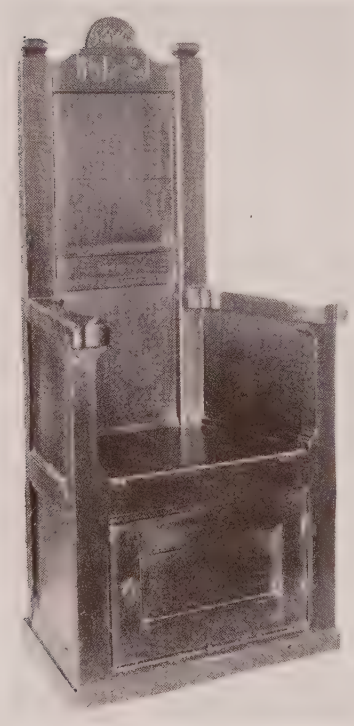
ENGLISH OAK CHAIRS

THOSE who are in the habit of regarding a chair merely as a piece of furniture with four legs and a back, with or without arms, do not appreciate the long process of evolution through which it had to pass before it reached the stage when it began to conform to this definition. With this development of the chair went that of the stool and the bench or settle, side by side, as one would expect, naturally.

It would be out of place here, even if it were possible, to illustrate a series of examples showing the stages in the evolution of the chair. Unfortunately, even for the purpose of a systematic enquiry into the development of the English chair, the necessary illustrative material is unobtainable; important links are missing, and these we cannot hope to reconstruct, pictorially. Rarity, especially when it approaches the unique, is very desirable from the view-point of the collector, but from that of the student of the history of furniture, a solitary example, which follows no fashion and has no fellow, is useless as a link in the chain. It is merely in the nature of a freak, and as such can have no place in his enquiry.

For the purpose of this book we are almost compelled to begin with the chair on legs. The Gothic prototype of the seventeenth-century chair in the form of a box with a back and arms has been illustrated on page 155, and a comparison of this with any of the examples given in this chapter will show the great change which came over English chair construction in the space of a century or less. This period would be narrowed, considerably, if we were to adopt the older and

incorrect system of referring to Tudor times what we know now to be Stuart chairs. In reality, the period of change is shortened in extent, but not in this way. The real Tudor chair (which is an exceedingly rare piece of furniture for two reasons, which will be stated later on) is nearly always a box with a back and arms, less ornate, it is true, but similar in constructive principles to its Gothic ancestor. An example is shown below and on the next page, and there is no doubt that this was the usual chair-style almost until the end of the reign of Elizabeth.



Oak Chair Dated 1574. *The Typical Tudor Chair.* (*Victoria and Albert Museum.*)

Tudor chairs are exceptional pieces at the present day, for the one obvious reason that very few have survived the three centuries or more since they were in use, and for another, which is not so obvious, namely, that the sixteenth-century chair was a rare article at the time when it was made. At this period the chair was a seat of dignity, reserved for the sole use of the master and mistress of the household. The usual seat of the guest or the retainer was the form, bench, or stool. There was another factor which caused the chair to be a still rarer article in England. Not only was it a piece for the wealthy, unknown in the cottage or house of the yeoman class, but those who were rich enough to possess several houses, were in the habit of taking their chairs with them when they migrated from one house to another. Even under the first of the House of Stuart the chair was not a familiar article of furniture in the English house, and it is not remarkable, therefore, that at the present day there are many more stools of this early period to be

found than chairs, which suggests as a logical explanation that a far greater number were made. There is not the slightest reason for supposing that these early Stuart chairs were singled out for destruction while the stools of the same period were preserved.

Up to the dawn of the seventeenth century both chairs and stools were joiner-made. The term "joint stool" is a corruption from "joyned stool," signifying a piece which was "joyned" or constructed after the joiner's manner. I know that the later stools with turned legs are styled in the same way, but they are also known as "coffin stools," and for no more reason. In the average household, in this or any other time, it could not have been the custom to provide stools especially to support a coffin, any more than, although most people die in their bedroom, the house-carpenter does not take the trouble to make the staircase with a movable balustrade, so that the coffin can be brought downstairs without trouble.

Oak Chair. The Mid-Sixteenth-Century Ornate Type, with Strong Italian or French Influence. (Victoria and Albert Museum.)

On page 162 is shown one of these "joyned" stools. The construction is simple and obvious to one working with primitive tools. Had Robinson Crusoe made himself a stool (I do not remember whether he did), he would have constructed it in much the same manner—that is, after a good many attempts. He would certainly not have made a stool as decorative as this one, as he confesses that he was a bad tailor and a worse carpenter; and one who, even with his primitive implements, could do no better than the awful skin cap which he wears in all the

illustrations I have seen, must have had the artistic sense very imperfectly developed.

The stool shown here, which dates from the early sixteenth century, and is, therefore, Tudor, consists of a top, two ends, and two framing-pieces, or "aprons." It is interesting to trace the constructional evolution of such a piece. The top is fixed to the ends by wooden pegs driven through. So much is obvious. It would then be found, even if the stool held together, that if the ends were fixed in an upright position, the stool would have a tendency to fall over. The next step, consequently, would be to splay the two ends outwards, but then they would break away from the pegs through the top, and the stool would flatten out if any weight were placed upon it. To remedy this defect, the method which would be devised, in the first instance, would be a rail placed low down, in the centre of the ends, mortised through, and wedged on the outsides to keep it firmly in place. This is just what has been done with the table shown here on the next page, a piece which is, approximately, of the same date as the stool which we are considering. This is good, logical construction. Why is it efficient in the case of a table, yet undesirable in that of a stool? *Because it prevents a number of these stools being piled closely, one on another.* We know that in great houses of the early Tudor

Oak "Joyned" Stool. Early Sixteenth Century. The Construction of this Stool should be Noted. (Victoria and Albert Museum.)

period the accommodation must have been elastic; one day the Great Hall would be thronged with retainers, on another it would be empty. Probably as many as a hundred or more of these stools had to be kept in reserve, so the necessity for close piling would be evident, especially as these retainers slept, as a rule, on the floor of the Great Hall, or in any odd corner. The joiner, therefore, in making his stools, would consider this point—perhaps not immediately, but as the result of many experiments—and would substitute the apron-piece for the stretcher-rail. At his first attempt he would fix his aprons *between* the ends, pegged from the outsides, but a later refinement would be to "halve" them, as shown here. This "halving" consists in slotting the ends to half the apron-depth, and then making a corresponding slot in the ends. To cut the apron into the ends, in its entirety, would seriously weaken the latter, and to cut the ends into the apron would be impossible with the overhanging apron-projections, as in this stool. That even with this method some weakness must have resulted the illustration will show. It is obvious to anyone looking at this stool where the slot in the apron begins, at the top or the bottom.

The long bench from Barningham Hall, now in the Victoria and Albert Museum, shown here on page 164, is constructed in the same manner, yet is probably a century earlier than the small stool.

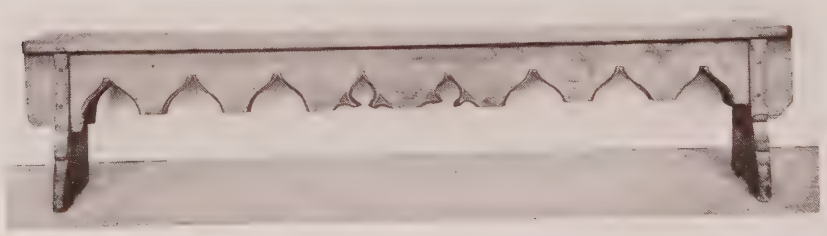
Oak Table from Cowdray Priory, showing the Early Sixteenth-Century Construction. Compare with the Stool on Previous Page.

During this period constructive principles must have remained stationary, more or less. Chairs and stools were made by the

carpenter or joiner, and his craft had already developed, almost to the fullest extent possible with the tools and appliances of the time, as early as the end of the fourteenth century, when Richard II. commenced the gigantic roof to the Norman Westminster Hall.

These digressions into constructive principles and their evolution are beyond the province of this book, yet he who lives with old furniture can appreciate it all the more (or should do so) by understanding how the old craftsmen encountered all the difficulties inherent to want of experience, or defective tools and methods, and how, after many efforts (and speaking for myself it is just these efforts which have a much greater interest than the perfectly produced piece), the difficulties were triumphantly surmounted, and English furniture began to resolve itself into styles and fashions in such manner that it is possible to chronicle its history down to the present day.

The first great stride, after the Tudor period, was the general adoption of the turning lathe as a tool of the domestic woodworker. To state that the lathe was a discovery of the early Stuart period is incorrect. In some of the early church screens, such as the one at Chinnor in Oxfordshire, the muntins have turned shafts, and this as early as the first years of the fourteenth century. Whether these were lathe-turned is doubtful; the lathe facilitates turning enormously, yet a round shaft or leg can be fashioned by hand. We know that the early Gothic column-shafts of stone were not produced on any lathe, but by the mason's chisel, and the early woodworker copied



Oak Bench or Form from Barningham Hall, Norfolk. First Half of the Fifteenth Century. (Victoria and Albert Museum.)

the methods of the stonemason very closely, as in the choir-stall canopies in Winchester Cathedral, which date from the latter part

Oak Inlaid Chair from Barking Church, Suffolk. The Cresting-Rail and Turned Vases are not Original; c. 1600.

of the thirteenth century, and are hewn from the solid timber, mason-fashion.

The turned shaft did not become a favourite motif with the Gothic woodworker, and it is rarely found in the fifteenth-century work. As the Church was the dominant patron of the carpenter or the joiner, it is not surprising that the lathe should have remained in abeyance. Under Henry VIII. the primitive pole lathe begins to be used, and it is curious to notice how the reversion to original type is as true with regard to woodworking methods as it is in nature. In the woods in the district round and about High Wycombe, the home of the Windsor chair industry, the primitive pole lathe can still be seen in use, differing little, if at all, from the type of the days of the second king of the House of Tudor.

With the lathe as a tool in general use, we get some remarkable results, and the separate trade of the chair-maker begins to develop away from that of the joiner. Furniture still remained very scanty in amount for many years, but stools and chairs began to multiply, especially the former, for the reason which has already been given. Commencing from the accession of James I. in 1603—when the turned leg on chairs and stools began to be general—we get the two trades

Characteristic Stools of the Seventeenth Century. (*H. Clifford Smith, Esq.*)
Elm Stool, c. 1680. *Oak Stool, c.* 1660. *Oak Stool, c.* 1630.

of the cabinet-maker or joiner (the one is only the later name for the other) on the one hand, and the chair-maker on the other, at first

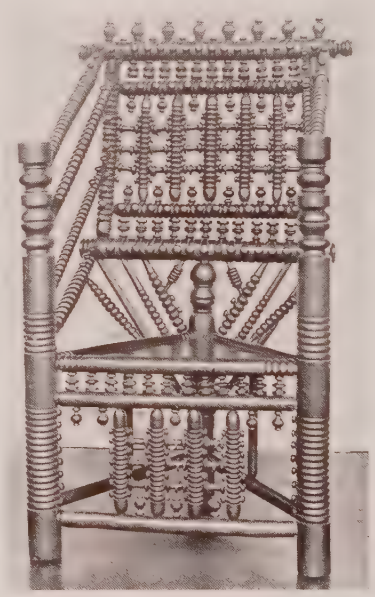
developing side by side, but afterwards tending to diverge more and more widely. The reasons for this breaking away, in the first instance, and the wide difference in the evolution of the two trades, are obvious, on a little thought. It is not until the early part of the eighteenth century that furniture begins to be made in any great amount, whereas in the middle of the seventeenth, or even earlier, chairs and stools must have been produced in considerable numbers. The same patron, also, who might require one or two tables and a cabinet, chest, or hutch, would order several chairs, and possibly a dozen stools. A trade which deals with great numbers has every incentive to develop, providing the quantity is not produced by machine. Thus we find the trade of the chair-maker is always more highly developed, and at the same time exhibits the more rapid tendency to become

Oak Chairs from Lyme Park, Cheshire. Lancashire Type.
(Capt. The Hon. Richard Legh.)
c. 1670. *c.* 1660–70.

mannered and depraved, than that of the joiner. It is not until the close of the seventeenth century, when the age of veneering sets

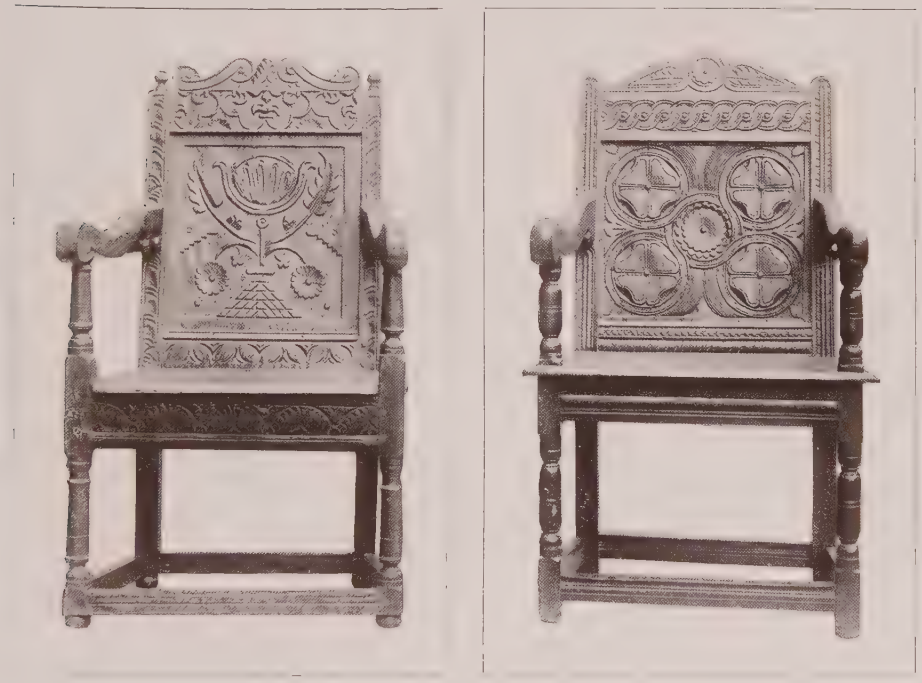
in, that true constructive principles, in the making of furniture, are sacrificed, whereas with chairs of James II.'s reign and that of William III., which follows it, the fine traditions of the early Stuart models are thrown overboard, *nor does English chair-making ever regain its early logical character*. This, however, is to anticipate later chapters of our book.

During the reign of Henry VIII. a conceit existed for making chairs entirely from turned pieces socketed together. These "turneyed" chairs are referred to in inventories of the time, and were, evidently, highly prized. None appear to have survived, nor is this remarkable, considering that the method of constructing a chair in this way could not have been good or permanent. Below is shown a seventeenth-century copy of one of these turned chairs, and a little consideration will show how defective it is constructively. That these early Tudor chairs existed in the seventeenth century is possible, and that this one was copied from a model, existent at the time when it was made, is probable. It is a curious piece, and one cannot resist the temptation of saying that the fashion probably owed its popularity to the fact that the chair-maker was enabled to use up any scraps of wood, which, from their small size, would be useless for any other purpose. These turned pieces, which include the baluster-fronts of dole and hanging cupboards, of which many were made during the seventeenth century, are usually constructed from fruit woods, pear, apple, plum, or almond, all close-grained timbers which never attain any great size.



"Turneyed" Chair of Fruit Wood. Mid-Seventeenth Century, probably copied from a Sixteenth-Century Model. (Victoria and Albert Museum.)

Chairs of the period of James I. are very much rarer than most people imagine, and when found are usually in a deplorable state of dilapidation or ignorant addition. The example from Barking Church in Suffolk, illustrated here on page 165, is of this date, and with the exception of the cresting and finials to the back, and the insertion of the rough vase in the central panel, is in almost its original state. It is an extremely handome chair, well designed and executed, and illustrates the early Stuart method of chopped-in inlay, to which further reference will be made in a later chapter dealing with English marqueterie.



Oak Armchairs (Midland Type), probably from Cheshire. First Quarter of Seventeenth Century. (Victoria and Albert Museum.)

Considering the lack of intercommunication between districts even as late as the end of the seventeenth century, it is not surprising that each county or locality should have had the tendency to evolve

Type of Seventeenth-Century Oak Chair, Cheshire Type, c. 1640.

working-class, up to a very late period in English history, were born, lived, and died in their native village. If the sons or daughters left the house, it was as soldiers or sailors in the one case, or as domestic servants in the other. As a general rule, there was every incentive to stop at home and to work for the notables in the immediate neighbourhood. The living was hard, possibly, but it was secure, in a certain degree. Occasionally a a style of its own. In these days of the railway train and motor-bus we are apt to forget how exceedingly untravelled even our immediate ancestors were. True, there was the stage-coach and the post-chaise, but even during the last years of the eighteenth century these were not the means of travel for the lower classes. The workman might journey afield, but if he did so it was on foot, with his pack on his back. The greater number of people of the

Type of Seventeenth-Century Oak Chair, Hertfordshire Type, c. 1660.

workman would migrate to London. A Chippendale would leave his native Yorkshire town, or a Sheraton his Durham birthplace, to try for fortune in the metropolis, the one to become famous, and possibly well-to-do, the other to achieve a posthumous reputation at the expense of poverty and neglect, until his death in 1806. We know of such instances, however, solely by reason of their exceptional character; the average craftsman stayed at home, did much as his fellows, had his share of joys or sorrows, such as fate decreed, and was laid to rest, at last, in his village churchyard. He added his quota to the formation of a manner, what we know in furniture as a style. What we really mean, when we use the term, is that the same models are repeated, with little or no modification, until from the number which survive we are enabled to state that this chair was a favourite pattern in Lancashire, this was the

Seventeenth-Century Oak Armchair, East Anglian, c. 1660.

Seventeenth-Century Oak Armchair, Home County Type, c. 1650.

Oak Chair, Lancashire or Derbyshire, c. 1640–50.

that, while they will have all their furniture of English origin, they care little beyond a general indication of period about its further history. Yet this knowledge is just what gives the collecting of English furniture its principal charm, beyond the mere fact of possession or the decorative value which each piece may have in the furnishing of the home—a value, be it noted, which is shared, equally, by the reproduction or the "fake."

type of Yorkshire, this of the bordering counties of Wales (Hereford, Cheshire, or Shropshire), and that of the Home Counties or of East Anglia. If there exist any merit in collecting old furniture, as distinct from the purely selfish hobby of acquiring things, it must be in the education which this knowledge of periods, and localities of origin, gives. Without this it can matter very little if the piece be the work of England, the Low Countries, France, Germany, or elsewhere, but it is characteristic of many collectors

Oak Child's Chair, Lancashire Type, c. 1660–70.

To attempt, in the limited space at our disposal in this single chapter, to give adequate reasons for the ascribing of counties of origin to many of the chairs illustrated here is hopeless. To be of any service the authorities for such origin would have to be pictorial; a mere description or a reference to this or that example in remote parts of England, and not illustrated in these pages, would be only vexatious. Some account of the method which has been adopted must be stated, or these ascriptions may be regarded as so much guesswork. Chairs are articles which are readily movable; there is no reason why they should not be taken from one place to another, far from their original home. This is not always the case, however, although very few of the larger houses remain to-day in the hands of their original owners. There is also the difficulty that chairs may have been imported from other counties, almost at the time when

Oak Chair, Warwickshire Type, c. 1650.

Oak Chair, Wiltshire Type, c. 1670.

they were made; and there is no reason, in the majority of instances, for supposing that they *must* have been made locally, by the village craftsmen. There are exceptions to this, however, although they are becoming rarer almost every day. There still exist records that certain chairs were locally made at definite periods and for known houses, in which they have remained from that day to this. Old inventories show this, and often quite unmistakably, especially in the early periods when the chair was a treasured possession. Thus no one will dispute the origin of a Yorkshire chair, as so many have been found in that county, which have remained *in situ*, that we recognise the type, the more as it persists for so long, almost down to the present day. We

Seventeenth-Century Oak Chairs, Yorkshire Type, c. 1660.

know the Windsor chair to be a product of Buckinghamshire for the same reason. These are the broad types, but there are others which

are equally unmistakable, although not so strongly marked. Here we are compelled to rely, to a great extent, upon carving or other details of ornamentation. We know, from similar details in church woodwork, screens, pews, benches or pulpits (work which was nearly always local, and which, from its nature, would be very likely to remain in the church for which it was made), that certain patterns were favourites in, say, Warwickshire or Somerset, and we know also that certain methods

Oak Chair, Lancashire Open Back Type, c. 1660.

Oak Chair, Yorkshire Type, c. 1660.

of construction were followed in some counties and districts yet not in others. Thus the flattened four-petal Tudor rose, such as in the back of the right-hand chair on page 169, was a favourite device with Lancashire chair-makers in the early part of the seventeenth century, and patterns which could be executed with the aid of a cutting tool—something like a pair of dividers with one "leg" filed to a chisel edge—the circle or the guilloche (which is only a series of circles interlaced), or similar motives.

Construction often varies widely, yet rarely in the same district. Thus in both the chairs on page 169 the cresting to the back is a part of the top rail, not dowelled on to it. This cresting-rail is tenoned between the uprights or prolongations of the back legs above the seat-framing. This is logical construction, and it should be noted very carefully, as many of the later chairs do not possess this feature, the cresting-rail being fixed on to the uprights, a very much weaker method. In the early chairs, where the wood used was heavy and strong, this is not a serious defect. Thus it would not be just to condemn the four chairs shown on pages 170 and 171 for this reason, although they are all constructed in this later manner. At first

Oak Settle, Somerset and Devon Type, c. 1670.

glance there is very little constructional difference between the Cheshire chair on page 170 and the one from Kent or Sussex shown

on page 178. The backs of both are framed up, but in the first the top rail runs across the uprights of the back; in the second, it is tenoned between them. With sufficient force, the top rail of the one could be pulled off, or the tenons broken by pressing it backwards or forwards. It is in this way that any strain comes on a chair-back. In the second, the only way in which the top rail can be removed is by forcing the uprights apart, and it is difficult to see how the force necessary could be exercised. It is true that this second chair had a dowelled-on cresting-rail above the back framing, but this being weak construction, the rail has disappeared. It may be argued that such strength is not necessary in a domestic chair, but once imperfect methods are admitted, for the sake of fashion, it is difficult to say when they will stop, until we reach the models of the period of James II. (as we shall see later on), where constructive principles are ruthlessly sacrificed to the dictates of a passing craze. Also, had the better methods been adopted everywhere, and at all periods, the supply of genuine antique furniture would not be so limited, at the present

Oak Settle, Lancashire Type, c. 1670–5.

day, as it actually is, and the faker would not be compelled to toil so hard to make up for the deficiency.

Oak Chair, East Anglian Type, c. 1680.

upholstery. The double-ended settee from Forde Abbey, which is the last illustration to this chapter, has this leather covering and also a padding of tow, the Cromwellian substitute for the later horsehair.

With oak furniture, as with walnut or mahogany, exceptional pieces command high prices, yet it is still possible to find good representative Stuart chairs, and at reasonable figures. Those of Yorkshire or Lancashire origin, as on pages 174 and 175, are worthy of

To describe in detail all the examples illustrated here would be tedious and unnecessary. This chapter stops short at the introduction of walnut (although this wood was used, in exceptional instances, during the oak period) and the use of upholstery. Here, also, it is unwise to be too arbitrary, as many of the chairs of the period of Cromwell had seats and backs formed by stretching stout leather across them, a method which may be styled as embryonic

Oak Chair, Kent and Sussex Type, c. 1670.

the attention of the discriminating collector, as both types are very suitable for the Old-World House, especially if it be of half-timber construction or of distinctive seventeenth-century character. If a number of these chairs be required, for the dining-room, there will be the interest of the search for examples as nearly alike as possible. Original sets of either Yorkshire or Lancashire chairs are very exceptional, and it is not worth an exaggerated price to have them all of the one pattern exactly. Slight variation in each adds to the charm, in my opinion. One would not desire a kennel of dogs so exactly alike that one would not know one from another; why not apply the same principle to chairs?

The seats of these Yorkshire chairs are nearly always slightly sunk, and this recessing is ideal to hold in position thin squab cushions, covered with a leather such as a Niger morocco, or, better still, a good cut-pile silk velvet. The latter will add a welcome touch of colour to relieve the otherwise sombre oak.

It is somewhat surprising to find how perfectly designed many of these oak chairs are, and how carefully the comfort of the sitter has been studied. It is also not generally recognised how much this comfort depends upon accurate proportioning, the right height of seat and the correct slope of the back, rather than upon such aids as upholstery can give. Thus, the chair on the right hand of page 171 was ideal. I had the opportunity of testing its qualities for some years, and I parted from it with much regret. It was not my property, however (I stood in *loco parentis* to it—in other words, I " minded " it for a friend), so I had no alternative.

It is difficult to say how much of this combination of comfort and appearance is due to a long tradition and a gradual elimination of errors of design, which tradition always implies. The Windsor chair of commerce, especially the pattern known as a " smoking chair," is a good example of this. Here is a good-looking, comfortable chair produced at a very trifling cost. The type is very old, however, dating from the early years of the eighteenth century, if not before, made by the million, and with gradual modifications and improvements introduced at long intervals. The result is as near perfection as one can hope for. While on this subject, the eighteenth-century

Windsor chairs, of the hooped-back kind, with central splats in the manner of Chippendale, are valuable pieces. They are nearly always made from yew, with seats of elm.

Space considerations preclude the illustration of any other than representative specimens of these Stuart oak chairs. Apart from the fact that the patterns are legion, there are many variations from the chair-form, the stool-table, the box-settle, the stool with cupboard, and the chair-table, which are not exceptional, but possess great interest for the true collector. Stools themselves offer a wide field for historical enquiry. There is the one which was made, as an accessory to the spinning-wheel, small and narrow in the seat, and with a marked outward splay to the legs. These distaff stools are now very rare. They are generally richly carved, as spinning was the polite occupation of the wealthy lady. Another variety was of exceptional height: from 21 to 23 inches, instead of the usual 17, intended, in all probability, for use at the tambour or the embroidery frame. Nowadays, the term "coffin stool" is often used to describe them all.

One must take leave of the English oak chair with considerable regret. We shall see, in succeeding pages, examples which are more ornate, more remarkable in every way, perhaps better designed, if detail and proportion only are to be considered, but the sturdy and logical character which distinguishes the English oak chair at its best, departs with it, never to be revived again, not even during the finest period of Thomas Chippendale and his school.

Oak Settle or Couch Covered in Leather, from Forde Abbey, c. 1660.

CHAPTER IX

ENGLISH OAK TABLES

IT would be imagined, at a cursory glance, that the closest structural kinship existed between the table and the chair, especially during the oak period. Take an oak chair, similar to any of the examples illustrated in the last chapter, without arms, and if we cut away the back above the seat, we get, in effect and in construction, a miniature table. There is the further relation between the two pieces in the chair-tables which were actually made, where the top or the back, according to whether we are regarding the piece as a table or a chair, was pivot-hinged, forming a top when it was laid flat and a back when raised. Such a chair-table is shown here on the next page. The top, or the back, consists of a number of boards, secured by battens or runners underneath, these battens being bolted to the arms so that the top can be raised or lowered, and when upright—that is, when the piece is in use as a chair—the overhang at the back acts as a buttress against the arm-balusters.

Dealing, as we have to do, with the evolution of type rather than with similarities of construction, there is, in reality, a closer association, in development, between the early table and the chest or coffer than between the table and the chair. At a later stage, chests and tables diverge very widely, but no more than chairs and tables do. There are the two factors, with chairs, to which reference has been made in the previous chapter, the one that they were the product of a distinct trade, and the second, that chairs were made in far greater numbers than other articles of furniture. Both would tend to carry the trade of the chair-maker into different paths, quite away from

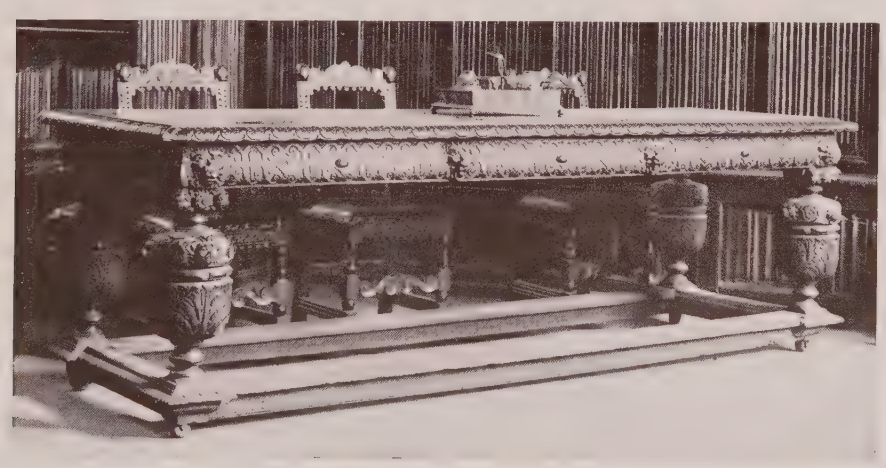
the craft of the joiner, who would be responsible for chests and tables, but not for chairs.

Of the form and construction of the earliest tables in England we know nothing, nor is it possible that we shall ever know, as every example has disappeared. We may be led astray, in our efforts to trace the genesis of the type, by the fact that the table is only a comparatively late innovation in English furniture, and that its prototype was the chest. Tables of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries may have never existed. There is some ground for this

Oak Chair-Table, c. 1660.

theory. In Westminster Abbey is a large chest or coffer, upwards of 13 feet in length. It is difficult to understand a piece as large as

this, where the lid must have been unreasonably heavy and cumbrous to open, if it were not intended to act as a long table at the same time. There is nothing to be placed in a chest which would entail a length of 13 feet; mere capacity is no reply, as two chests, each of half this length, would be much more useful, and more easily transported from place to place, should occasion arise. There may have been a need, however, for one table of this size, where two would not have answered the purpose. True, the chest is lower than the usual table, but this is only because chairs and stools are made, roughly, 18 inches in seat-height instead of 10 or 12. Japanese tables, in a country where it is the custom to sit on the floor, are made as low as 6 inches or less. I know that 18 inches, roughly, is the comfortable sitting-height, whether at a table or away from it, but the question of dignity—which played an important part in the Middle Ages—may have dictated that certain persons should be raised above others, especially at meals, and this custom may have commenced with the low stool and the high chair, and have developed, in secular houses, into the chairs or stools of normal height, but with those for favoured guests placed on a daïs

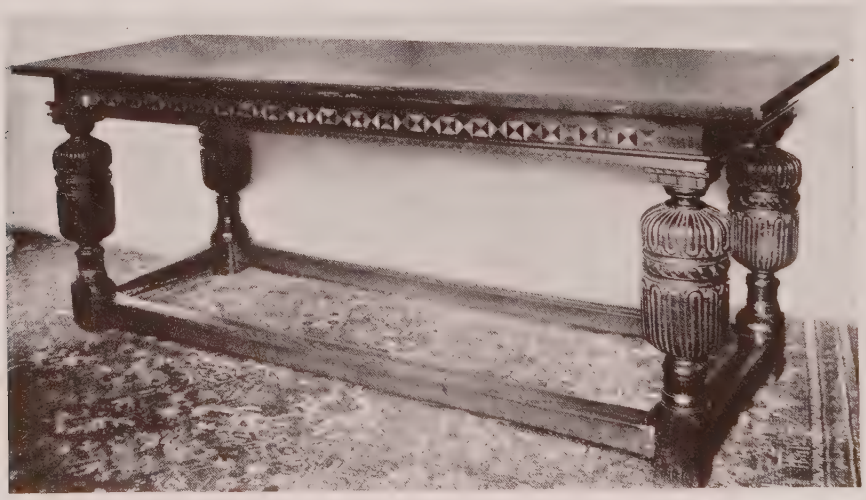


Oak Table in the Vicars' Hall at Exeter. Very much "Restored." This is probably an Original Late Sixteenth-Century Table.

in the Great Hall, while in clerical establishments, where the chair was not a usual article of furniture at all, the progression was from

bench to pew, choir stall, and finally to abbot's throne, the last erected on three or four steps above the chancel-level.

The earliest tables which are known to exist at the present day are the huge Gothic trestles at Penshurst. One of similar type, probably of considerably later date, and certainly much restored, is, or was, at Great Fulford in Devon. These are exceptional pieces, however, and are not for the average collector or for the furnishing of the Old-World House. It is as well, however, to be able to recognise these early tables, on the principle that we may be lucky enough to stumble across a rare example hitherto unknown or unsuspected. It is not likely, but it is possible. The knowledge necessary to enable the collector to distinguish between original fifteenth-century work and twentieth-century imitation must be presumed, and a long purse may be convenient. A little expert advice is also not to be despised on occasion.



Oak Table with Bulb-Turned Legs and Chequer-Inlaid Frieze. The Bulb has the familiar Gadroon Carving on both Upper and Lower Members; c. 1640.

Oak tables—that is, of the kind with which we are immediately concerned in this chapter—may be roughly divided into (1) the long, narrow, so-called refectory table, seldom less than 8 or 9 feet in length

nor more than 3 feet in width; (2) a shorter kind, known as draw-tables, where half-tops are arranged on runners—called "lopers"—to pull out and increase the length of the main top; and (3) tables with hinged tops, of which the "gate-leg" is the most familiar illustration. Many of the refectory or draw type are commonly referred to the period of Elizabeth, although it is extremely doubtful if half a dozen tables exist which can be described, on reliable evidence, as belonging to the sixteenth century. The one in the quaint old hall of the Vicars' Choral at Exeter, with its small frontage and curious door, opening directly from the street, is the best approximation to an Elizabethan table which I have seen, although the "improvements" of Victorian times, which have added a new top and fixed a horrible capping to the old stretcher-rails, have almost succeeded in transforming this fine

Oak Refectory Table with Simple Inlaid Frieze. The Legs have the usual Gadroon above and Acanthus below. 1640 *Type.*

Oak Table with Guilloche-Carved Frieze. The Legs show the Development Towards the Later Tapered Baluster Form; c. 1660.

table into an ignorant forgery or travesty. In its present condition (and it does not seem to be in any danger of being properly restored, as the Vicars' Hall appears to be the care of nobody in Exeter that I could discover*) it is shown here on page 183, together with the wonderfully realistic linen-fold panelling with which the hall is wainscotted. The chairs shown behind the table are obvious "Victorian Tudor," but there is a very interesting mantel on the south side which dates certainly from the first years of the sixteenth century, if not earlier.

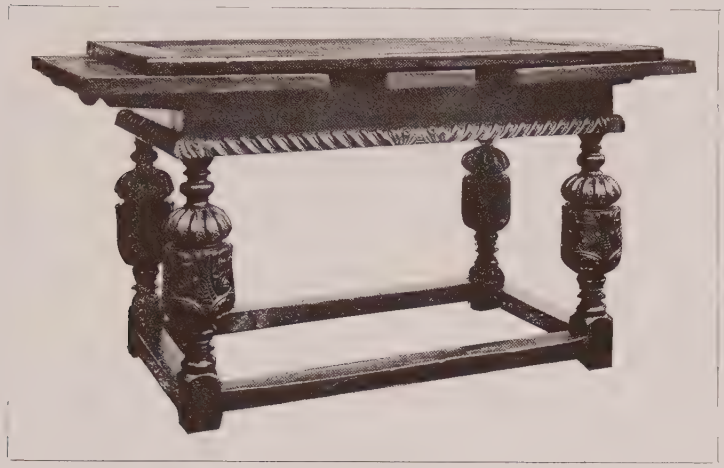
The Gothic table has been specifically referred to above, as it may be necessary to warn the collector (however unnecessary such caution may appear to be) against certain tables with four or more square legs, carved

Oak Table with Legs and Frieze Gadroon-Carved. Mid-Seventeenth-Century Type of the Western Counties.

with Gothic detail, and with remains of what purports to be original painting in the quirks, or recesses. To anyone who has studied the

* The local policeman, who took pains to inform me that he had been on duty for years, did not even know of the existence of the old hall of the former singing men of Exeter Cathedral.

development of the early table in England such pieces are as absurd and as anachronistic as an Elizabethan bicycle, but, unfortunately, the opportunity of seeing and examining pre-Tudor tables occurs to very few. It is doubtful if half a dozen examples exist; I only know of three. It is quite certain, however, that, prior to the sixteenth century, no table on legs, whether square or turned, was ever made. Even for many years after Henry VIII. came to the throne the fashion was for the trestle type, similar to the one shown on page 163, but, as a rule, from much heavier timber, and seldom less than 10 feet in length. The early seventeenth-century table is nearly always of considerable length—from 7 feet upwards—and narrow,



Oak Draw-Table with Heavy Bulbous Legs. Early Seventeenth-Century Type.

Oak Draw-Table with Inlaid Frieze. The Bulb Legs Finish under the Frieze Rail in Voluted Capitals; c. 1630. (*Victoria and Albert Museum.*)

rarely more than 3 feet. The top is composed of a number of battens, sometimes with clamp pieces at the ends, but more often with the boards tongued and grooved and pegged through to the framing of the table beneath. The turning of the legs, however varied the patterns may be, always takes one of two forms. In the first, it is contained within the squares into which the upper framing or the stretcher-railing is tenoned. In the second, the leg centres in a massive bulb, of much greater thickness than the squares. The same fashion is used for the posts of the large oak testered bedsteads of this period, or for the balusters of the court or standing cupboards. This detail was, in all probability, derived from Dutch sources; that it was an arbitrary fashion is shown by the fact that the bulb itself does not add any strength to the leg—on the principle that the breaking strain of a

Oak Draw-Table with Baluster Legs, c. 1650.

Oak Draw-Table with Marked Dutch Character especially in the Form of the Stretcher. Late Seventeenth Century.

chain is in its weakest link—and is wasteful both of labour and timber. Modern commercialism would make a bulbous leg in three pieces, with the bulb itself turned from thicker wood than the sections above and below it, with the three sections dowelled together. The Jacobean leg, however, is in one piece, as an almost invariable rule, although this entails the cutting away of a considerable amount of wood on the lathe, and the planing down, on four sides, of the upper and lower squares. That the bulb was intended only as an ornamental device is indicated by the fact that, in English tables, it is never left plain, but is always carved, generally with a crudely cut acanthus on the lower section, and a gadroon on the one above. When the bulb is found uncarved, a Dutch origin is nearly always to be suspected.

The second class, that of the turned leg which is contained in its own square-thickness, is more often plain than carved. It is much

Oak Gate-Leg Table. The Early Seventeenth-Century Type of Column Leg with Turned Collars.

more popular in the work of the Home Counties and East Anglia than elsewhere, and these plain legs, relying on no carving to disguise any

imperfection of line, are nearly always well turned and gracefully formed.

It is the leg where the turning is contained within the wood of its upper and lower squares which develops; the bulb-leg ceases entirely when the fashion for this form declines, and it is seen no more in English furniture. The former type evolves in two ways, both of which are the direct result of greater facility acquired in the use of the turning lathe and additional knowledge gained of its possibilities. The first manner is the twist-turning of the first Restoration years, although many of the early examples have this spiral, fashioned entirely by hand, in the Gothic manner of two hundred years before. Whether the fashion for the twist caused the slide-rest to be invented, or

Oak Gate-Leg Table with the Bobbin-Turning of the Commonwealth Period.

whether this adjunct to the lathe rendered spiral-turning a commercial possibility, and thus enabled it to become popular, it is not

possible to say. The slide-rest is not an English invention; it was known and used, in a primitive way, on the Continent for fifty years, at least, before its presence becomes evident in English twist-work.*

Spiral-turning, belonging, properly, to the walnut years, which may be said to begin with the Restoration of the Monarchy in 1660, and this chapter being, practically, confined to oak tables prior to that date (although the later types illustrated here carry us beyond almost to the end of the Stuart period), the description of lathe-twisting must be reserved for a later chapter.

From the exaggerated bulb-turning of the early years of the seventeenth, possibly of the later sixteenth, century, table legs evolve in several ways. We find the bulb itself more restrained, contained within its own leg-squares, as on page 186, or else tapered in the form of an inverted vase, as on page 188. Another fashion which develops

Oak Gate-Leg Table with Twisted Legs of the Early Restoration Years, c. 1660.

simultaneously with, but independently of the bulb, is the column, sometimes with a plain shaft, more often with turned collars, as on

* The principle of the slide-rest is explained in Chapter XIII.

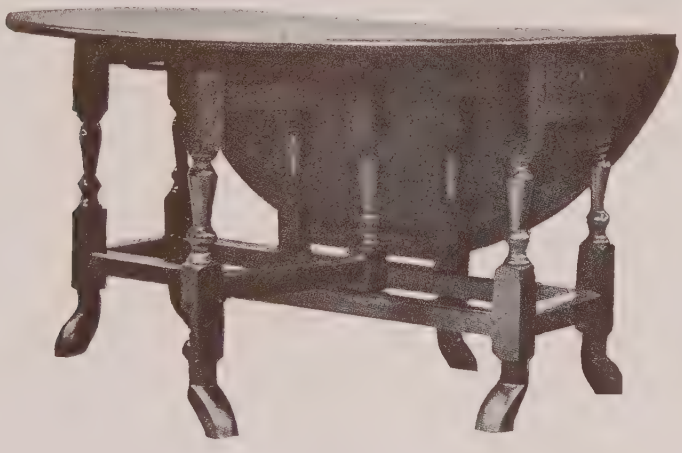
page 189. There is a rare form of this leg where both the column base and capital are used, the shaft sometimes left plain, more usually fluted, and in rare instances carved with a kind of arabesque ornament clothing the leg itself.

In this breaking away from the heavy bulb in the direction of lighter detail we find exceptional forms, such as the reeded shaft (page 186), or the octagonal section (page 188). The latter is, properly, a Dutch form, and is generally found in combination with certain other defined characteristics, which indicate a Low Country origin. The vase-turning, as on the arm-supports of the chair-table on page 182 is a distinct fashion, and great skill and taste is often exhibited in the fashioning of these legs. Every designer knows the enormous variety which can be obtained by the shape and proportioning of the two ogival lines which form this kind of vase. The altar railing in New Romney Church in Kent is one of the best examples of delicate vase-baluster turning which I know.

Walnut Gate-Leg Table with Twisted Legs and Moulded Stretcher-Railing, c. 1670.

On page 188 the vase is inverted. This form was used in a variety of ingenious ways, almost until the close of the seventeenth century. The bobbin or reel turning, as on page 190, is practically confined to

the Commonwealth period. The twist, although used at all times during the Stuart period and to be found, also, in Gothic screens and railings as early as the fourteenth century, only becomes general after the Restoration, and, while found in oak, is more properly a walnut fashion. During the whole of the seventeenth century there is the growing tendency to make tables of smaller size, until after about 1690 they begin to take on distinctive functions (such as the card table, for example) and types begin to multiply. The method of pivoting one or more of the legs so that it could be swung out, to support a hinged flap of the top, permits of the development of the gate-leg table. There are many varieties of the gate-leg. As a rule the flaps are hinged across the depth of the table, which precludes a greater width of top than 5 or 6 feet when opened, but in rare instances the flaps are fitted the other way, resulting in a very long and narrow table when they are down. The stretchering necessitates the framing of two legs at top and bottom—known as a "gate" in consequence—



Walnut Gate-Leg Table of Late Stuart Period with Splayed-Out Feet, a Crude Form of the Braganza or Portuguese Toe, c. 1680–90.

but at a later stage, probably just prior to the eighteenth century, the leg is secured to the underframing of the top only, a portion

of which swings out on a wooden hinge (with a metal pin), thereby forming the "pull-out" leg tables which are the direct successors of the gate type. This is the later development, however, and belongs to the walnut and mahogany periods, not to the oak years.

A much greater variety of woods appears to have been used, at all periods, for tables than for other furniture. In this respect the early English table is peculiar. From its form and construction it is possible to use small pieces, especially for turned legs of the less exaggerated kind, although the same may be said, in even greater degree, of chairs, but here the choice of woods is usually more restricted. I have found these later Stuart tables made from oak, walnut, elm, ash, yew, apple, pear, cherry, damson, plum, and other woods which are better known to the horticulturist, perhaps, than to the joiner.

CHAPTER X

CHESTS, COFFERS, AND CUPBOARDS OF THE OAK PERIOD

WITH the single exception, perhaps, of the stool, the chest or coffer is not only the earliest piece of furniture in England of which we have any knowledge, but it is also the prototype of all the others which succeed it. With primitive tools and methods of construction borrowed from the stonemason (in both furniture and woodwork of the thirteenth century, or earlier, timber is handled and worked in practically the same way as stone), the first problem would be, what to do with the tree when felled? The idea of sawing it into planks and pieces, and constructing furniture by building up with mortise and tenon, or any other of the joints known to the carpenter, would be a later development. Thus the huge choir-stall canopies in Winchester Cathedral are hewn from the solid timber, yet at the close of the fourteenth century, in the gigantic roof of Westminster Hall, Hugh Herland, the King's master carpenter, employs all the constructive methods which are known to the present-day joiner, and shows a knowledge of the possibilities and limitations of wood which demonstrates, clearly, that the craft of the carpenter was already far advanced at his date.

It must not be imagined that the same degree of progression in constructional knowledge was present in all other branches of the woodworker's art. Had the development proceeded on homogeneous lines, we would be justified in referring many of the "dug-out" coffers (that is, where they are hewn from the solid timber) to very early times indeed, yet it is very doubtful if some of these examples are not even

later than Herland's roof. The next method of chest-construction is hardly less primitive. Stout posts are provided for each corner, prolonged as feet to keep the chest from the damp of the floor, and the front, back, and ends are rough slabs of wood grooved or tenoned into them. In some cases the posts were dispensed with, the front and back being fixed to the ends directly with large clout-headed nails. It is not until the late sixteenth century that chest-fronts or ends begin to be panelled.

There can be little doubt that from the end of the fourteenth century, for a period of nearly two hundred years, the carpenter was an artisan of greater knowledge and status than the furniture maker, the *huchier*, or arkwright—literally the maker of " arks," as chests were often styled in early records. With the carpenter, the assistance of the wood-carver was by way of decoration merely, but carving was often the actual finish of much of the arkwright's work, which would possess neither definite form nor completeness if it were omitted.

Painted Oak Chest with Applied Facets, c. 1600.

The pulpit at Chivelstone in Devonshire (which cannot be much earlier than the concluding years of the fifteenth century, and may

be even later) is an example, fashioned from the solid trunk almost entirely by the carver's chisel and gouge. To say that a greater degree of knowledge was not possessed, at this period, than to hew a pulpit out of a solid mass of timber is obviously absurd, but here is one fashioned in this way, a method which no craftsman accustomed to framing and similar constructional devices would have adopted. It is unwise, therefore, to refer these "dug-out" chests to a very early period solely on the evidence of their primitive character.

Oak Chest with Panelled and Arcaded Front. Mid-Seventeenth Century. Kent or Sussex.

Oak Chest with Panelled and Moulded Front. Dated 1637. *Midland, Cheshire, or Derbyshire.* (*Victoria and Albert Museum.*)

The box, in one form or another, either dug-out or constructed, would probably be the first piece of furniture to be made. As soon as the need arose to secure possessions which were prized, a box of some kind would be the immediate follower of the hole in the ground with slab of wood or stone for a

lid. The tomb itself would be an ever-present reminder of the advantages of the chest. Small boxes would function as seats

Oak Chest with Panelled Front, c. 1640. *Kent, Rochester, or Maidstone District.*

(even the Elizabethan chair, as we have seen, was really a box with a back and arms), larger ones as centre or side tables, while preserving their useful character of containing things. The cupboard, which in its primitive form is merely a chest turned up

Oak Chest with Panelled and Arcaded Front, c. 1650. *Rye or Romney Marsh District.*

on its end, with the top functioning as a door, would be a later development from the chest-form. Thus we find chests existing

to-day which have come down to us from as early as the thirteenth century, yet no cupboards, in any form, which can be referred to anything like such a date. True, this is not conclusive, as the chests may have been preserved and the cupboards destroyed, but this is not likely. The cupboard came later simply because it had only one use, to contain articles, whereas the chest had several, as we have seen.

The development of construction appears to be the same in both the early chests and cupboards. In Chapter VII. examples of the former, including the one from Dersingham Church (page 152), which dates from the close of the fourteenth century, were given, and it will be noticed that there is little or no attempt at framing at this period. The chest-front is solid, although mortised into stout corner-posts which contain also the sides, and all ornament of moulding or carving is cut into the wood. There is no attempt made at applied work, involving the use of an adhesive such as glue. In the same way, the doors of the Gothic cupboard are solid slabs of wood, hinged with

Oak Inlaid Chest, c. 1640. *Probably East Anglian.*

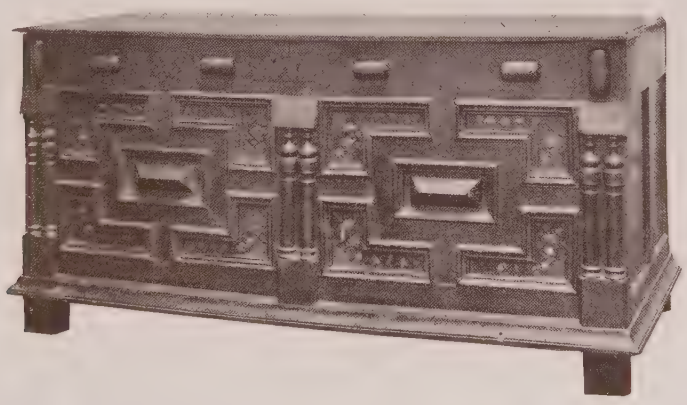
metal or straps of stout leather nailed to the door and the style. Where ventilation was desired—some of these cupboards were

intended to contain food—this was effected by piercing these doors in patterns, usually geometrical, but sometimes in free form (see page 157). It is to be noted as a curious fact, and one indicating that chests and cupboards were the work of the *huchier*, or ark-wright—an inferior craftsman to the carpenter—that wall-panellings were made for many years, during which time the possibilities of the mortise and tenon, in framing, were either not known or not practised by the makers of these chests or cupboards. It is not until late in the reign of Elizabeth that the chest-front or cupboard door is framed and panelled. To those who are interested in the subject of English furniture from the historical and developmental sides, as distinct from the mere acquiring and possessing, this plurality in production is an important point. It has been the custom hitherto to regard the evolution of workmanship and design as from the simple to the complex, or from the crude to the highly finished. Convenient as this method might be, there is no such royal road to an understanding of the subject. Prior to the Dissolution of the

Oak Chest with Inner-Frame Panelled Front, c. 1665. *East Anglian of Fine Type.*

Monasteries, that is before 1535, English woodwork had reached its zenith, and, from such rare examples of furniture as have persisted to our day (the chair already shown on page 155 may be taken

as a good, but not necessarily an exceptional, example), we can estimate the furniture standard as very little, if at all, inferior. Those who deny that the Gothic woodworking skill was cloistered in abbey and monastery, and that very little of artistic craftsmanship existed beyond the shadow of the Church, may, perhaps, be able to solve this riddle. Why does the former skill and taste depart for many years after the Dissolution had driven forth monks and lay brethren to roam the highways or haunt the thickets throughout broad England? We find the Gothic influence after 1550, it is true, but how debased! Principles, taste, and craftsmanship, which had made the fifteenth century so renowned in the annals of English woodwork, had all departed. Whither? Take any example of the crude Gothic of the later years of Henry VIII., such as the hutch already illustrated on page 157. This is not the work of a race of craftsmen which had forgotten the earlier traditions, it is the crude barbaric production of men who had never known anything better. Yet it is so easy,



Oak Chest with Inner-Frame Panelled Front, c. 1650. *East Anglian or Home County Work.*

because of this very crudity, to place such pieces at a much earlier date than the one to which they properly belong.

For the collector, especially one of modest means, such as would

possess our Old-World House, the oak furniture which is possible begins with the seventeenth century only, and this is especially true of the chest and cupboard. Some knowledge and a nice discrimination may result in the unearthing of a Gothic piece, if only a fragment. If furniture of the fifteenth century still exist, we may be sure that it is in little known and unexpected quarters, and possibly held in small esteem. After all, collecting is an unexciting business when both parties to a transaction know the value to the uttermost farthing.

Oak Chest of Drawers with Moulded Fronts, c. 1685. *Eastern County Origin.*

In the house of low rooms, such as our Old-World House is, the oak chest possesses special advantages in the harmonious arrangement of furniture. It is low, has a flat top on which china or bronzes can

be displayed in the most decorative way, and one can, if so disposed, almost make a dado of these seventeenth-century chests round a room without the appearance of overcrowding, and with the gain which the infinite variety and interest of really fine examples gives, apart from the individual and personal note which each piece has for its collector. Thus we may commence with an early Stuart—possibly a late Elizabethan—chest, such as the one on page 196, where the decoration, apart from the running guilloche pattern in the frieze, consists entirely of applied faceted pieces and split balusters. There are many evidences to show that the original finish of these early chests was paint, in many colours of yellows, reds, blues, and greens, garish possibly, especially at the time when they were new, but in accordance with the tastes and fashions of their period.

Oak Chest inlaid with Bone and Mother-o'-Pearl, c. 1685-90. *East Anglian.*

On page 197 is a low chest in the rich manner of Kent or Sussex of the mid-seventeenth century, strongly influenced from French sources. The top has heavy end-clamps, and the ends are panelled—

a rather unusual feature. Below this is a dated example, carved with the name "Esther Hobsonne" across the centre of the frieze. A chest of this kind would, probably, be made to commemorate a birth, perhaps of the local landowner's daughter, to be periodically filled with linen or fabrics as a gradually accumulating gift, until the child arrived at a marriageable age. Did Esther Hobsonne ever arrive at maturity to enjoy her chest and its contents? I wonder!

From the Rochester or Maidstone district of Kent comes the fine example on page 198. Here the detail of the carving is of pure French inspiration, although a conventional form of the Tudor rose is used to centre each panel. It is curious to notice, in the end-posts, how the Gothic tradition still lingers.

Oak Cabinet Inlaid with Bone and Mother-o'-Pearl. The Feet are Later Additions; c. 1685–90. *East Anglian.*

A good deal of discussion has arisen from time to time as to the legitimate use of the words "coffer" and "chest." Mr. Fred Roe, whose knowledge of English oak furniture must be received with the greatest respect,

maintains that he is using the two in the architectural sense, the coffer having a front of one single panel (or slab?), the chest-front being broken up into two or more. May this not be (I say it with all deference) seeking for a distinction where none exists? The word "chest," as I understand it, is merely the Anglo-Saxon *cyste*, the Danish *kiste*, the Latin *cista*, or the German *kiste*, very slightly modified, while the coffer is derived from the old French *cofre* (modern French *coffre*), all meaning a chest or box. That "coffer" or "chest," in the various old spelling modes of England, was used at different times, depended, in my opinon, on whether one was writing with a Norman or a Saxon bias. As some justification for Mr. Roe's distinction (however fine-drawn it may be) may be mentioned the desirability of distinguishing between the chest with and without panelled front, so that when a writer uses the word "coffer" or "chest" we know exactly what he means to convey. In this connection, however, the box facing page 5 of Mr. Roe's "History of Oak Furniture," is a true coffer, but so is the one at the top of Plate LXIII. in the same book.

Oak Open Buffet, c. 1600. *East Anglian.*

The mid-seventeenth-century chests from Kent and Sussex, especially those in which many of the French details, such as the guilloche, are copied, are attractive pieces, and are not beyond the purse of the modest collector, as a rule. A good deal depends, of course, on the amount of eagerness to buy which is exhibited; dealers are but human. A good example, with pilastered and arcaded front, is shown on page 198. Chests with inlay (always chopped into the solid wood in the manner which will be described in the next chapter)

Oak Angle Buffet with Chequer Inlay, c. 1630. *Probably Derbyshire Origin.*

are somewhat rare. The one on page 199 is typical of the work of the East Anglian counties. The front is panelled, with applied mouldings.

The richest chests, which are also generally of Norfolk, Suffolk, or Essex origin, are those where the fronts are "inner-frame" panelled, as on page 200. The oak here is of the highest quality, cleft instead of sawn, a method which displays the fine "splash" figure of the wood to the greatest possible advantage. In the centre of each panel is a faceted rectangle of cherry wood, stained to a deep shade. With the exception of some restoration to the feet, which is clearly noticeable in the illustration, this chest is the finest and rarest example shown in these pages.

Oak Open Angle Buffet, c. 1640. *Midland Counties.* (*C. H. F. Kinderman, Esq.*)

During the Commonwealth period a fashion begins for the intricate mitring of mouldings in the decoration of the fronts of chests

and similar pieces. Occasionally the panels are further enriched with an inlay of bone, ivory, and mother-o'-pearl, sometimes cut into veneers and laid marqueterie-fashion, more often cut into the solid wood. The next four illustrations show examples of this style, which appear to have been confined to the Eastern Counties of England, south of the Humber. I have never seen this work in Midland furniture, certainly not with anything like the refinement displayed

Oak Court Cupboard with Chequer Inlay, c. 1640. *Lancashire or Yorkshire.*

in the beautiful chest shown on page 201. That this style originates from Holland there can be little question, but transmuted through

English channels it gains enormously. In the three pieces on pages 202, 203, and 204 will be noticed the development in the direction of the chest with drawers, which became such a characteristic article of furniture in the early years of the eighteenth century.

The buffet in its various forms begins as an article of furniture made for the display of plate, silver before and after the Commonwealth, pewter during the Puritan years. The open buffet, such as on page 205, which is really a sideboard of three tiers, is extremely rare, although forgeries abound. Some of these are exceptionally clever,

Oak Court Cupboard, c. 1650. *West Country (Warwickshire?).*

that is, if one is prepared to make certain concessions at the outset. These open buffets are early; they are exceptional after about 1630.

The construction of this time did not admit of applied and glued mouldings. The tops are *always* a thin plank, sometimes left without any other finish, but often reinforced by a small moulding, mitred round and nailed to the frieze. The next development, which begins early in the reign of Charles I., is the angle-buffet, where the upper tier is filled with a cupboard splayed on the sides. Two examples, both of Midland origin, are shown on pages 206 and 207. The second is an example of an oak piece of remarkably high quality. These

Oak Court or Standing Cupboard, c. 1660. *Kent or Sussex Origin.*

angle-buffets are also excessively rare, and even more extensively forged than those of the open type.

With the court or standing cupboard, both the upper and the

lower stages are enclosed with doors. In the one on page 208 the upper part is that of the angle-buffet, with central door and splayed sides. This is exceptional and early. The more usual kind is where the upper stage has two or three doors. The front is nearly always divided into three panels, but in some instances the central one does not open. Drawers in the base, as on page 209, are exceptional. The cupboard on page 210 can be taken as a representative piece, of fine quality, of its time. In practically every case the top is a thin plank, generally with the grain of the wood running lengthwise (*i.e.*, from side to side of the piece), but in some examples from back to front in a number of thin boards, tongued and grooved, and showing the end grain on the front.

Oak Court or Standing Cupboard, c. 1670. *Welsh Bordering Counties.*

Occasionally, as in this example, the top is " thicknessed " up with a small cornice moulding, mitred round and nailed to the frieze, under the overhang of the top boards. Classical cornices, as on page 209,

especially with forward breaks over the balusters, are very rare, and never found in East Anglian or Home County work.

With these chests and cupboards we take leave of English furniture of the oak period. To the trained craftsman it has a special appeal. The construction is nearly always honest and logical. There is no attempt at hiding inferior wood under veneers or deceptions of a like nature. If I were asked to define perfect construction in furniture, I should lay it down as a first principle that a piece should be put together without the aid of glue. My second condition would be that the particular article should be just as strong as it looks, neither more nor less. As a third, I should insist on the use of timber in boards or panels no wider than 9 or 10 inches, as a precaution against splitting or warping. Tudor and Stuart furniture would survive these conditions admirably; can we say the same of any of the furniture which succeeds it?

CHAPTER XI

MARQUETERIE FURNITURE

WHILE this book does not profess to be a technical treatise on English furniture, it is impossible for the collector to take a really intelligent interest in so characteristic a phase of the subject as marqueterie undoubtedly is, without some knowledge of the methods employed.

The inlaying of the one wood in another is of extreme antiquity, possibly dating from Egyptian times. Inlay, however, is not necessarily marqueterie, and it is desirable here to define terms very concisely if confusion is to be avoided. It is possible to inlay pieces of wood (of contrasting colours, for obvious reasons) into solid timber. Some of the Stuart oak was inlaid in this fashion, as we have seen. A design was prepared, of which two or more exact copies were made (by a method which will be explained later), one pasted on to the pieces of veneer to be cut, the other to the ground which was to be inlaid. This ground was cut away with a pointed knife, driven along the lines of the design by blows from a small hammer, the wood then being removed, to veneer-depth, with chisels. If the two operations, the one of cutting the design with the saw, the other of grounding out the wood with knife and chisel, be accurately done, the inlay should fit perfectly. This is the Tudor and Stuart method, but it permitted of little advance in the art. It is, nevertheless, true inlaying.

The second process is that of parqueterie. The most simple explanation of this is the making of a chess-board, with squares of alternately light and dark wood laid together and then glued down to a bed or ground. That a chess-board is not made exactly in this

way does not matter very much; it illustrates the method of parqueterie-work in a manner which will be comprehensible to the untechnical.

With marqueterie, proper, we enter upon a much wider field. Whereas marqueterie is an inlay, yet it is incorrect to style inlay or parqueterie as marqueterie, for reasons which the following explanation will make clear.

The marqueterie-cutter begins with a carefully drawn design as a basis of operations. This design is traced round with a needle (an apparatus similar in action to a sewing machine is used for the purpose), and is then known as a "master-pricking." If this "pricking" be laid down on a sheet of white paper, and beaten with a "pounce," (bitumen powder tied up in a rag through the pores of which the powder will escape if the "pounce" be used hammer-fashion), the design will be transferred to the paper beneath, in a series of finely dotted lines, through the holes in the "master-pricking." If this second pattern be laid on a metal plate, placed over a gas ring (the plate must not be too hot, or the paper will scorch), the design will be burnt in, permanently, and cannot be rubbed off, as it otherwise would be.

A series of copies are taken in this way and cut into portions, according to the pieces of different coloured woods required for the work. Marqueterie is usually cut in several layers, from six to eight in number, the two outside veneers being discarded, as on them the saw-cut has a tendency to "rag" or splinter. For these "outside cuts," therefore, common wood is generally used. If the pattern be simply one of dark wood on a light ground, or *vice versa*, then two cuttings only are necessary. By a method which was practised in the later phases of English marqueterie, both ground and inlay were cut in the one operation. This should be clear from the following description. Take two sheets of paper, black and white for convenience, and paste the edges together to avoid slipping. Now trace a design on one of these sheets and cut round the lines, both papers at the one time, with a pair of scissors. The result, *no matter how careless the cutting*, will be that one black pattern will fit into a white

ground and one white design into the black sheet, and each exactly, as they were cut together. It will be seen, therefore, that if nothing is to be wasted, the one operation of cutting will produce two panels of inlay, one of which will be the counterpart of the other. It will be important to bear this explanation in mind, as we shall see original and counterpart in some of the examples illustrated in this chapter.

If the inlay be of woods of various colours, the same method can still be adopted, as six veneers of different shades or tints can be cut at the one time, but here a considerable amount of waste will be inevitable, although this will be compensated by the saving of time which the cutting of the one pattern, several times, will entail, as compared with the cost of the wood only. If the two black and white sheets be reinforced by four others, say of blue, red, yellow, and green, and the six cut as before, it is only necessary to take the five inlay pieces (as distinct from the one ground layer) and to cut them into portions, according to the design, and an inlaid pattern of five different colours will be formed, each of which must fit exactly as before. If we cut the inlay in *six* layers in one operation, and *six* sheets of the ground veneer at a second, both exactly from the one pattern, we can get six different results according to the colour counterchange.

I have described and illustrated the whole method of marqueterie cutting, pricking, and shading in "Early English Furniture and Woodwork." It is therefore unnecessary to repeat this here, as those who are interested in technical details can refer to that book.

It can be imagined that this method of cutting marqueterie in layers, at the one operation, would not be discovered in the early stages of the craft in England. We know that marqueterie is an older art in Holland than in this country, and many pieces were imported into England as early as the last years of the reign of Charles II. The important point, however, for our present enquiry, is that a mere inspection of such pieces would not discover any such secret of manufacture, and even the presence of other examples, in actual counterpart, would also not disclose anything, as any workman would know that there must be a waste with each cutting, and the

inlay wood of one might be used as the ground of another panel even if the two were cut separately. It is the simultaneous cutting of ground and inlay which would remain a secret.

Let us examine, in the light of the foregoing explanation, the table shown here on the next page, which dates from the short reign of James II. (1685–89). The jessamine flowers and leaves are in white and green-stained ivory, and, owing to the cost of this material and the impossibility of procuring it in large sheets, any practical man would know that each flower and leaf must have been cut separately from small pieces. This is the earliest type of English marqueterie, and the methods which have been adopted show this unmistakably, beyond the possibility of a mere surmise. What this table lacks in development of method, however, it more than atones for in skill in craftsmanship. To veneer the turned legs with a plain veneer is a task of some difficulty, but this is simple compared with a problem of bending an inlay of brittle ivory cut into the same veneer. It is only possible to secure the necessary pliability by long immersion in strong vinegar or acetic acid. This table is interesting in possessing its original escutcheon and key, both of silver, the bow of the key designed with a double-Q interlaced, and surmounted by a baron's crown. Although obviously made to a special order, its original owner is unknown.

Major Holden has allowed me to photograph several pieces of English marqueterie, from his collection, in illustration of this chapter. They all date from the best—perhaps not the rarest—period, from 1695 to 1705, when the art had reached its full artistic development, and yet had not become mannered or depraved in the direction in which all fashions tend after a time. Technically, it is the latest fashion of all, the fine scrolled marqueterie, which is the most perfect, but when an inlay of one wood in another, approaches, in delicacy, the work of the engraver's tool, there can be little merit remaining. One can admire the exquisite craftsmanship as such, yet regret that so large an amount of time and labour was wasted on so ineffective a result.

Nowhere in the history of English furniture is the difference between seeing and observing more marked than in the case of

Table Inlaid with Marqueterie of Various Woods and White and Green-Stained Ivory, c. 1685 89.

marqueterie, lacquer-work, perhaps, only excepted. Observation implies culture and a knowledge of processes; it must be both intelligent and educated. The microscopic slides of the bacteriologist will teach nothing to those whose eyes have not been trained—who do not know what to look for. Place a hundred watch-movements on a tray, and one whose knowledge of a watch is only that of a piece of gold or silver-cased mechanism which is carried in the pocket, to indicate the time, will see only superficial differences which mean little or nothing to him. If he apprentice himself to a watchmaker for a few years, and acquire a knowledge of the principles of, and the various inventions in, horology, all these differences will acquire a new meaning; he will be looking at them with the same eyes, but fortified with intelligence, a knowledge of principles and methods. If I were disposed to give advice to collectors, as a body, I should place this first: learn to know how the thing is made before you "collect" it; of what materials it is composed, and their nature; and as much of the evolutionary history of its production as possible. Only by these means can collecting be intellectually profitable. Even the schoolboy learns geography from his postage-stamp collection—in fact, there is no better method of teaching young people than through the medium of hobbies.

Let us consider the table-top on the next page as an example of the distinction between seeing and observing. It has a central oval panel with an inlaid border, beyond which is a design suggestive of interlacing, formed by the use of cross-banded rosewood edged with ivory lines. By this "strapping" twelve panels, in three series of four each, are formed. The inlay of the central oval represents a vase of flowers, of unbalanced design, so while we do not know what counterparts may exist of this panel, each piece of the inlay must have been separately cut and put together without duplication. The outer inlaid border to this oval consists of four motives, each of three scrolls, and if this border could be cut into four equal sections, each would correspond exactly. This means that the border could be cut in four quarters or thicknesses, at one operation, and the four layers, placed edge to edge, would produce the design here. Now there are saw-

cuts, partly hidden by rosettes at the junctions, showing that the border was cut just in this way, to economise labour. It will also be noticed that the four rosettes are counterparts of each other. Similarly with the four panels immediately beyond, some of the pieces which compose the pattern are counterparts of others, yet each panel varies from its fellows in actual drawing. In the remaining eight panels some of the details in one will be noticed, in counterpart, in others, the idea being to attain the greatest variety by the most economical means. A marqueterie cutter, after examining this top carefully, could state that at least three others were made at the same time. I am referring only to the marqueterie itself, of course, as whether it was used on other tables, or for cabinets, or not at all, no one could possibly say.

Marqueterie Table-Top Edged with Ebony and Ivory, c. 1680.

With this possibility of the duplication of parts, so that many pieces could be cut or formed at the one operation, the cabinet on page 220, where the detail is shown very clearly, may be given as a test piece.

The workman who had to consider time and expense would seize any opportunity of shortening his task by any duplicating method. The cabinet itself is a very interesting piece, full of the inspiration of Holland of about 1700–1705, and shows remarkable ingenuity in the use of "oyster-pieces"—cross-sections from small boughs, generally

Cabinet Veneered with Walnut Oyster-Pieces and Inlaid with Marqueterie, c. 1685.
(Major Norman Holden.)

of walnut or laburnum. Being cut across the branch—that is, on "end-grain"—these "oyster-pieces" are exceedingly brittle and

require great care in gluing, as " end-grain " wood does not adhere firmly unless it is well sized or prepared by other means.

Cabinets of the type of the one on this page are so numerous, comparatively, that they must not only have been made in considerable numbers, but also over an extended period. It is usual to refer them

Marqueterie Cabinet on Stand, c. 1680–85. (*Major Norman Holden.*)

to the later period of the reign of Charles II., which may be true of this example, but is too early for others. Here the white and stained

Marqueterie Cabinet on Chest of Drawers. The Plinth is not Original; c. 1690.
(*Major Norman Holden.*)

pieces of ivory, as in the table on page 217, are used. The banding on the fronts of the doors is formed by sections of cross-cut walnut saplings. The four panels surrounding the central oval are in two

pairs, each one with marqueterie in partial counterpart of the other. These cabinets on their spiral-leg stands are, perhaps, the most decorative of all the pieces produced during this marqueterie period, being nearly always good both in proportion and detail.

The double-doored marqueterie cabinet on a chest, with a lower part fitted with drawers, is the next phase of this type. Two examples

Marqueterie Cabinet on Chest of Drawers, c. 1690–95. (*Major Norman Holden.*)

are given above and on the previous page. The first has the usual cushion-moulded frieze, which remains a familiar feature in these

English cabinets for upwards of fifty years. The second has a simple cornice (somewhat marred by the square fillet above, which is a later addition), and is without a frieze. The evolution, in the designing of this early marqueterie, can be traced in these two cabinets very closely. There is better spacing, and a more decorative sense of design in the second than in the first.

Marqueterie Mirror Frame, c. 1685–90.
(*Major Norman Holden.*)

The very charming marqueterie mirror on this page also belongs to this late Stuart period, if not to the early years of William III. These mirrors are rare and costly pieces, but their decorative value is very great, alike in oak-panelled rooms, or in those of the later period wainscotted with painted deal. That the idea of these frames of quarter-round section is an inspiration from Holland is more than probable, yet the Dutch mirror frame is quite distinct from its English fellow. Sometimes these frames are veneered with simple cross-grained walnut; occasionally they are lacquered. They appear to have possessed an original cresting in nearly every instance, although accident or faulty construction has often resulted in its loss. In the marqueterie mirrors, which are, perhaps, the rarest of all, the inlaid patterns often exhibit strong Dutch character, such as the representation of a hunting scene in the central circle of the pediment of the exceptional mirror shown here on the next page. The marqueterie is of the early fashion of jessamine leaves and flowers in

Marqueterie Mirror Frame Inlaid with Various Coloured Woods and White and Stained Ivory, c. 1675.

Marqueterie Cabinet Inlaid with the Arms of Bowes-Lyon and Blakiston, c. 1700.
(C. H. F. Kinderman, Esq.)

white and stained ivory in conjunction with other floral forms and birds, all beautifully cut without engraving or sand-burning.

The remarkable cabinet, two views of which, open and closed, are shown on this and the next page, is one of those exceptional pieces which are encountered, here and there, throughout the entire history of English furniture. It appears to have been a custom, at all periods, to make special furniture to commemorate an event, generally a marriage. In the late Tudor or early Stuart periods, when linen was a valuable possession, chests were sometimes made for a female child, inscribed with the name and date of birth. In such a piece a proportion of the

The Cabinet on Page 226 Shown Open.

linen or other fabrics woven by the household would be placed, from time to time, to accumulate until the child grew up to marriageable age. This was the true "dower chest," although the name has since been applied, indiscriminately, to coffers which could not have had any such purpose. I have also seen a fine wardrobe with a fretted pediment, into the design of which were incorporated the initials J. B. and S. B. and the date 1773. On page 42 is illustrated a panelled room from Barnstaple with P. D. and E. D. above the mantel, in remembrance of Pentecost and Elizabeth Doddridge and their marriage in 1617.

With furniture made for the nobility or the landed gentry, the coats of arms of each family would be used instead of vague initials. In this cabinet, or linen press, the two front doors have the arms of Bowes and Blakiston inlaid in the panels. Formerly at Streatlam Castle, Darlington, Co. Durham, a seat of the Earl of Strathmore and Kinghorne, there is little doubt that the shield on the left-hand door is inlaid with the arms of his family, Bowes-Lyon. These are, in full, "ermine, three longbows bent in pale, gules, stringed or, on a chief azure. A swan argent, holding in the beak a dish with a covered cup in it, between two leopards' heads, or. Crest, a demi-leopard, guardant, gules, holding between the paws a bundle of arrows, or, barbed argent, and banded with a ribbon, azure." This bundle of arrows is shown in the pediment of the cabinet here, although not according to the manner of heraldry.

The Blakiston arms are now borne by the family of Blakiston-Houston of Orangefield and Roddens, Co. Down, Ireland. I have been unable to discover a record of any union by marriage between the two families of Bowes and Blakiston. There is an extinct Irish barony, Bowes of Clonlyon (1758–1767) which, by a curious coincidence, has not only a similar name to that of the family of the Earl of Strathmore, but also possessed a coat of arms, identical in many respects, namely, "Ermine, three bows with strings palewise (perpendicular) proper for Bowes," but as this Irish peer was the first and last baron, and died a bachelor, the Bowes coat of arms here cannot be his, although, as far as they are shown on this cabinet, they agree exactly.

Marqueterie Hanging Cupboard, c. 1695. *(Major Norman Holden.)*

The Blakiston arms are: "Quarterly, 1 and 4, or, a chevron chequey or, sable, and argent between three martlets of the second, 2 and 3, two bars and in chief 3 *cocks gules*, an annulet, azure, for difference (for Blakiston) mantling sable and or; and crests (1) upon a wreath of the colours, a sand-glass proper, (2) upon a wreath of the colours, a cock statant gules charged with an annulet, or." Motto, "Do well and doubt not."

There is a curious implied reference to the Blakiston motto in the plant selected for the inlay of the lower drawers. This is the cruci-

Bureau Inlaid with Marqueterie of Walnut on a Ground of Almond-Tree, c. 1690. (*Viscount Rothermere.*)

ferous genus Lunaria, the *L. biennis*, the leaves of which are often skinned and dried and then used as ornaments for vases. In this

Cabinet Inlaid with Marqueterie of Walnut in Panels of Almond-Tree Surrounded by Walnut Oyster-Pieces, type of c. 1695–1700. *(Viscount Rothermere.)*

dried state, where the inside leaf turns to a bright silver shade, the *L. biennis* is known in nearly all the country districts of England by the name of "honesty." There is a further significance, indicating a union by marriage, in the fact that the sprigs are suspended from true-lover's knots. In the centre of the inside door is an elaborate monogram of the letters B. L. and D., evidently Bowes-Lyon of Darlington (or Durham), and Blakiston of Down.

The veneers of the cabinet are a faded English walnut (so bleached by the action of light that the whole piece has a Dutch appearance) and a pollarded or burred yew-tree. The high pediment, with its intricate triple-mitring of the capping mouldings, also suggests the influence of Holland very strongly, yet the workmanship is entirely English, and the "allusive" heraldry of the two names almost precludes a foreign origin, a rebus, as this punning coat of arms is, having no significance in another language, and therefore not likely to be adopted by a foreign workman. This is a remarkable cabinet in every way, in very good preservation, and very little restored. It may date from as late as the first years of the eighteenth century, but in the absence of any knowledge of the year of the Bowes-Blakiston marriage only an approximate period can be stated.

For intricacy of design and cutting, the six panels on the front of the doors of the large hanging press, illustrated on page 229, may be said to mark the zenith of this finely coloured floral marqueterie in England. In spite of the cipher on the frieze and the base, this piece has been reconstructed, but the quality of the marqueterie, which is quite original, is superb. If English marqueterie could have maintained a standard as high as this, then the work would have been incomparable and have defied any competition with that of Holland.

During the latest phase, which may be said to coincide with the last semi-decade of the seventeenth century, marqueterie becomes quieter in tone and much more intricate and delicate in cutting. Apparently a much larger amount of labour was involved in the production of the finely scrolled ornament, such as on the bureau on page 230, where the inlay is of walnut in a ground of almond-tree, bordered with sand-shaded and laurelled bandings, and if we con-

Cabinet Inlaid with Scrolled Marqueterie of Holly on a Ground of Walnut, c 1700.

sider such a piece by itself, this is true. The possibilities of exact counterpart, however, where corresponding panels of marqueterie, of light wood in a ground of walnut, are used for another piece, have to be considered, and if the whole of one "cutting" were used in this way, there would be no waste of material whatever, and the time and trouble taken over this original marqueterie would be recompensed, if divided between four or six articles of furniture. That a counterpart of this marqueterie—if not several—existed at one time there can be little question. The cabinet, page 231, shows this scrolled marqueterie in panels, on a ground of walnut oyster-pieces, still of dark wood inlaid in a light-coloured one, whereas in the large secretaire, page 233, we have the reverse, or counterpart, light holly in a ground of walnut burrs.

Walnut Chair (Lower Part only) Inlaid with Marqueterie, c. 1695–1700.
(C. H. F. Kinderman, Esq.)

The two chairs, above and on the next page (the lower section only of the first is given to exhibit the detail to a reasonable scale), are illus-

trated to show how the fashion for marqueterie was applied, in very rare instances, to the decoration of such pieces. Chairs inlaid with marqueterie and of English origin, however, are exceedingly rare and valuable pieces. Although from quite different sources, both examples here have the "goat-foot" to the cabriole legs, a peculiar detail which enjoyed a transient popularity during the last years of the reign of William III. It is doubtful, however, if the chair on this page is not a later copy from the reign of George I., as the carving on the knees, although not very good in execution, indicates too advanced a style for the earlier period. It is an interesting chair, however, with its exceptional form of cresting-rail and central splat, the latter inlaid with a device somewhat in the French manner, and surmounted by a coronet. The other chair is typical not only of English work, but also at its best. The dawn of the cabriole era—that is, of the cabriole leg rounded in section, which is of eighteenth-century origin—can be traced in this model.

Walnut Chair with Central Splat Inlaid with Marqueterie, c. 1695. (*Major Norman Holden.*)

I have stated, in the preface to this book, the danger, if not the impossibility, of giving "hints" which are supposed to be of service to the collector in the detection of "fakes." If there be such a thing as degrees of the impossible, then the attempt to give such "hints" with regard to marqueterie furniture approaches the superlative. Let us consider

the subject by stages of origin or nationality, quality of workmanship, methods employed, and surface condition. If there exist any clues to the detection of a forgery, which could be explained in a chapter such as this, and to the untechnical, they would be found in one or more of these categories.

Origin or Nationality.—The earliest marqueterie found in this country was of Dutch workmanship, undoubtedly; the evidences for this are conclusive. Thus we find marqueterie used for cabinets or tables at the same period when crude oak cupboards, chairs, and tables, sometimes decorated with the chopped-in inlay, before referred to, were being made. I do not use the word "crude" here in any derogatory sense. Some of the later Stuart oak, from the view-points of vigour, spontaneity, and logical construction, is far in advance of any marqueterie furniture which was ever made. I am alluding rather to new and complicated methods of decoration, by the inlay of woods, one in another, in veneers, and the "laying" of these veneers with the press, caul, or veneering hammer. It is incredible that this fashion can have persisted (and we know how general it must have been from the number of marqueterie pieces which have survived) side by side with the plain Stuart oak, if both were of English origin, and contemporaneous. There is another significant point. It is extremely rare to find marqueterie used for the decoration of chairs, and when we do find such examples, such as the one illustrated on the previous page, they always exhibit a strong Dutch character. Clock cases also bear out the same contention. The mouldings of these, especially of the long cases of the so-called "grandfather" clocks, are always classical in section, and very delicate in detail. The same fashion also follows, after a few years, in the marqueterie furniture, such as cabinets and similar pieces, yet such sections are never found in typical Stuart oak. This disparity can only be accounted for by a different school of workmen. A few years after, and we find these Dutch workmen coming across the North Sea, in the train of the Stadtholder, and settling in London, the Home Counties, and especially in Norfolk and Suffolk. From these localities nearly all this elaborate marqueterie furniture originates.

Quality of Workmanship.—If one could say, with even an approximation to the truth, that the old cutting was more exact, better in drawing, or more spirited in execution, than the modern "fake," the problem of the detection of the latter might be considerably simplified. I will not say that the opposite of this is the fact, but it is certainly nearer the truth. The old marqueterie varies from the extremely fine to the incredibly coarse; from the well-chosen selection of veneers, either in natural or dyed colours, to the utterly incongruous, and from exact cutting to other work unworthy of an apprentice in a modern marqueterie cutter's workshop. A little thought will show that this must be so. For some pieces, in the original instance, a high price must have been paid; for others there is evidence of cheap work in every line and detail. This furniture had no "antique" or rarity value at the time when it was made. At the present day the price paid for so-called "original" pieces is immensely higher than the cost of making. Knowing this, why should not the "faker" do his best—or worst—with his copies, use all his skill, and devote adequate time to their production? Of his ability there is no question. Cabinet-makers, marqueterie cutters, and lacquer workers exist at the present day fully equal, in technical skill, to any of the old makers, and they have, in addition, the advantages of modern education, tradition, easy and cheap transport, museums, books of reference, photography, and a thousand advantages which the Stuart worker did not possess. It is a doubtful compliment, to both, to vaunt the seventeenth-century workmen at the expense of their brethren of the present day. We are dealing with craftsmanship which is evolutionary and progressive, not with that sport of nature or heredity, the creative genius.

Methods Employed.—The method of cutting fine marqueterie (I am omitting any reference here to the modern cutting machine, something like a hybrid between the fret-saw and the sewing machine, as it is never used for really good work) does not differ, in any way, from the original manner of the late seventeenth century. Methods, therefore, are no indication of antiquity. The same veneers and dyed woods, or white or green-stained ivories, are also used, so there is no clue to the detection of "fakes" here.

Surface Condition.—I do not think there is one piece of late seventeenth or early eighteenth century marqueterie in existence which has not been restored or resurfaced at some time or another. Veneering is not permanent in the sense that Tudor or Stuart oak is; veneers will blister, and pieces of inlay become loose and require attention, and you cannot relay any veneers or inlay without glue and the hot caul, and the heat *which must be used* will render some resurfacing imperative. It is the merest ignorant nonsense to talk about "original condition" where English marqueterie is concerned if the use of this term imply that the piece has not been restored in any way since it was made.

In view of the foregoing, the question whether *anyone* can tell the difference between original marqueterie and reproductions or "fakes" becomes a very pertinent one. The answer is, that a technical expert can, for the one reason, that while the "faker" can duplicate the old patterns and veneers, he cannot satisfactorily imitate age. Time is against him; he has to produce the result of a couple of centuries of wear in as many months, and this he cannot do. He *must* use bleaches and caustics and other noticeable means, and the presence of these can always be detected by one whose eye is trained to observe. To describe these signs of faking, especially to the untechnical, is hopeless; one might as well ask a leading surgeon to write a pamphlet entitled "Every Man his own Operator," or a physician to expound the treatment of obscure diseases for the guidance of the "man in the street."

CHAPTER XII

LACQUER WORK

THERE is, perhaps, no branch of antique furniture where greater discrimination is required than that of lacquer work—that is, if the furnishing of the Old-World House is to be successful. It is not that good lacquered pieces are undecorative in themselves—in fact, the best examples are both charming and artistic in the highest degree—but with lacquer, probably more than with any other furniture, it is so easy to overdo the thing, especially in the house of modest size, such as our Old-World House is to be. I have seen rooms in which everything—wall-panellings, chimney-pieces, and furniture—was lacquered, but I have never known such a room, whether large or small, to be even approximately satisfactory. It is the old story, that "one can have too much even of a good thing."

I have purposely used the term "lacquer" in the wrong sense in the foregoing, as the name is so popularly employed to describe not only a groundwork (which is the true lacquer), but also the ornament which is applied on, or incised in, such ground. I have done so in order to arrive at the meaning of that which I wish to express in the shortest space possible. To begin with a simple caution, and then to hedge it round with a number of technical phrases and reservations, in order to be scrupulously exact, is only to render obscure that which should be quite clear.

A few lacquered pieces, preferably black or cream, can be used with advantage even in a small room, in order to achieve that variety in effect which has been insisted upon so often in these pages. With

other colours, such as red, green, or blue, one has to be exceedingly careful. So much depends upon the size of the piece or the room in which it is to be placed, and also upon the brightness or quality

The Two Halves of a Twelve-Fold Screen of

of the particular colour. Thus there are fine and bad reds, yet the good colour is not necessarily the most subdued. Green lacquer

should *be* green, if it is to be entertained at all, not a rusty black masquerading as a green. Blue lacquer we can disregard for the present purpose, as, in antique pieces, it is so rare as to be almost non-existent.

Chinese Lacquer. (*C. H. F. Kinderman, Esq.*)

Out of the thousands of pieces of lacquer which I have seen, during some thirty years, I have only known of two examples of genuinely

old blue lacquer. On the other hand, I have known of hundreds of fakes, some of which were really clever imitations. With buff or cream lacquer it is difficult for anyone with taste to go wrong—that is, always supposing that the piece itself, in size or form, is suitable for the room in which it is to be placed.

Lacquered furniture can be divided, broadly, into two classes. To the first belong those pieces which have been made, specifically, for such decoration (the familiar square cabinets on gilded stands of carved wood are examples of this type); in the second, we can place those articles of furniture where the lacquering is merely by way of adventitious ornament, a substitution for veneering or polishing of the natural wood.

To the last of these two categories belong nearly all the lacquered pieces subsequent to about 1710–15. With the first of the two classes just stated, one feels that lacquering is an inevitable concomitant to the design and general form, whereas with the second it is merely an optional matter.

To enter into a technical description of the processes of lacquering would be to carry this book far beyond its proper scope. That the art of the lacquer worker originates in China is unquestionable, although it permeated into Japan at a much earlier period than is generally suspected. In both countries the lacquer (the word is used here in its true sense—namely, a ground-coating, which may be ornamented or left quite plain) is a viscid gum from a native tree, tsi, the *Rhus vernicifera*, a variety of the sumach. This gum, when exuded, hardens on exposure to the air, and when dry, is insoluble by any agents known to us, even one as drastic as pure alcohol, which will attack any European varnishes almost at once.

The true Oriental lacquer being, therefore, unaffected by those conditions which would cause any Western varnishes to decay or perish, acts as a very efficient preservation to any wood panel on which it is applied, providing such application be thorough, and all atmosphere excluded from flat surfaces and edges. So convinced is the Oriental of the air-excluding qualities of his lacquer that he does not hesitate to make his pieces from a soft white wood, very much akin

Oriental (Japanese ?) Cabinet. Gold Decoration on a Black Ground.
(Major Norman Holden.)

to our fir or pine, which, unprotected, would fall to pieces in a few years. Yet when this Chinese or Japanese lacquer is kept in a perfect state—that is, not allowed to become chipped—it will withstand the extremes of the climate of the Eastern States of America, which may be regarded as by far the most severe test in the whole of the civilised world. Brittle as the true Chinese lacquer is, it is incredible how long some of it has persisted. The large screens, which were among the first pieces which appear in the manifests of the East India Company's tea ships, and which are comparatively numerous both in Europe and Eastern America, are known to date, in some instances, from the latter part of the Ming Dynasty—that is, prior to 1643. Asia is the home of marvels of craftsmanship, from the points of view both of artistic workmanship and persisting qualities. Lacquered cabinets and screens were, after all, made to be used very tenderly, but rugs and carpets were made to be walked upon, perhaps not by Western boots, and certainly not by those decorated with hobnails; yet carpets are known which date from the fifteenth century at least, and are still in a state of good preservation.

To describe lacquer work, in anything like fulness of detail, would demand, not a chapter or a book, but a library. We can resolve the subject into one of nationality, Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Persian, Indian, Dutch, French or English, and each of these into further subclasses according to periods, such as the Chinese from Ming, and Manchu—K'hang Hsi or Ch'ien Lung—down to modern times. Another classification would differentiate between the lac of Pekin, Canton, Foochow, and Amoy. Yet a third would separate the colours, black, red, yellow, or green; another would divide the carved lac of Foochow (the well-known cinnabar often erroneously styled "coralline") from the incised or "Coromandel." Yet a fifth order could be made of the simple raised and gilded gesso ornament, as distinguished from the polychromatic. So varied is the work of China, in this field alone, that further classifications would have to be adopted, from time to time, almost with each fresh discovery. With countries such as Japan, Persia or India, the work of division would be almost as complicated, and the knowledge necessary for this task is possessed

Cabinet of Black-and-Gold English Lacquer on Carved Stand formerly Silvered and Glazed.
(C. H. F. Kinderman, Esq.)

by no single living man, and probably by no group of individuals, no matter how large. How many lifetimes the ideal work would demand can be only dimly imagined. One thing is certain. The full history of lacquer work will never be written, or even adequately attempted.

Our concern with lacquer work here can only be of the briefest character—that is, only as far as lacquered pieces enter into the furnishing of the Old-World House. In the hands of those endowed with taste, lacquer is a valuable adjunct in the making of the successful home; in certain rooms, and used without discretion, it can ruin the most effective decorative scheme. As a background, especially in large rooms, nothing is better than the fine Chinese screens similar to the one illustrated here on pages 240 and 241. Proportions are important, of course, and many of these screens demand a room of at least 12 feet in height. It is just this question of proportion which makes the distinction between furniture and lumber, or between a properly furnished room and the average dealer's shop.

Oriental lacquered furniture (that is, those pieces made for Chinese or Japanese use) is rarely satisfactory in an English home. This does not apply to those exceptional pieces which were sent out in the tea ships to be lacquered in China, as they were designed and made according to Western ideas. The same may be said of others which, though made in China or Japan, were intended, at the outset, for the European market. In the latter, however, there is present the indications of failure on the part of the Oriental to appreciate European conditions. Thus, the cabinet shown here on page 243 is well made, and the lacquer work is of high quality, but it is not a satisfactory piece of furniture for an English room. The decoration, however, is finely executed and full of interest.

One point may be stated here with regard to Japanese furniture. Unlike the Chinaman, who sits on a chair, the Japanese sit on the floor. Their eye-level, therefore, in their homes, is some 3 feet lower than that of the Chinaman. The Japanese square cabinet is a box with doors, behind which are a series of drawers, on a squat plinth, sometimes cut out in bracket form, usually not more than 3 inches in height. These cabinets were made to stand on a floor, their height not more

Square Cabinet of Incised Polychromatic Lacquer on Carved Gilt Stand. English Workmanship. (C. H. F. Kinderman, Esq.)

than that of an average English table. In this country it became a fashion to mount these cabinets on carved gilded stands, in the same way as with the Chinese cabinets in the reign of Charles II. The quality of Japanese work of the eighteenth century is very high. The lacquer grounds are often exceedingly good, even superior to those of China, as the Japanese artists were wonderful imitators at this period. The point which the collector should observe, however, is that these Japanese cabinets are neither as rare nor as valuable as those of Chinese workmanship, yet as the work is unmistakably Oriental, and often of fine quality, they are often sold as Chinese. If the cabinet has this cut-out bracket plinth it can be recognised as Japanese at once, and its value properly assessed. If the plinth be absent, it is advisable to look at the under side to see if it has been cut away. It must not be imagined that a square cabinet of Oriental lacquer is necessarily Chinese if it have no such base, or any signs of one having existed, but the presence of the bracket plinth can be accepted as a certain indication of Japanese origin. One of these Japanese lacquer cabinets on gilded stand is illustrated in Fig. 503 of "Early English Furniture and Woodwork."

Square cabinets of Chinese make are exceedingly rare in this country, although some have been made from portions of Chinese screens cut up for the purpose. It is to be presumed that screens damaged beyond repair were used in this way. That this method of making cabinets is an old one, in England, is shown by the reference in the folio of Stalker and Parker, dated 1688, where these "professors" of the art of "lackering" refer, in scornful terms, to the practice. Similar cabinets—that is, of square form, mounted on carved and gilded stands, of English workmanship throughout—must have been made in considerable numbers here between the years 1665 to about 1700. After the latter date the fashion became general of taking the prevailing models of the walnut period, bureau bookcases and similar pieces, and lacquering them as an alternative to veneering or inlaying with marqueterie.

Of these English square cabinets on gilt stands two examples are given on pages 245 and 247. The first has a decoration of cranes in

Corner Cupboard of Black-and-Gold English Lacquer of Exceptional Quality.
(Major Norman Holden.)

well-raised gilded gesso on a fine black ground. The stand has suffered somewhat, pieces of board being fixed behind the pierced work, presumably for strength, which mar the effect intended by the open cutting. These stands were never gilded in Stuart times, the usual practice being to silver them, and to imitate gilding by the application of yellow varnishes. Unfortunately it is only within recent years that this original method has been recognised, with the result that nearly all these varnishes have been stripped, regarded probably as later applications. The silver thus exposed is somewhat cold and garish, and a later "improvement" was to paint over the silver with brown bitumen varnish, which has since turned opaque and now looks like common brown paint. Many of the eighteenth-century mirror frames have been treated in the same way, probably at the same period when the stand of this cabinet suffered from the same process of "renovation." The other example shown here is in a better state, and is considerably later, of about the reign of George I. Here the lacquer work is polychromatic and incised in the ground. The cabinet has a carved cresting, a feature which became very general after about 1710.

In buying cabinets of this kind, special attention should be paid to condition (they are expensive things to restore), quality of the lacquer decoration (this may vary from the extremely fine, well-drawn, and "raised," down to a mere daubing, and both extremes may be perfectly genuine work of the period), and, last but by no means least, to the quality of the brasswork, the hinges and lock-plates. These should be pierced and finely engraved, in the best examples. Solid plates—that is, unpierced—are seldom found on cabinets of otherwise high quality. There is always the possibility that the original hinges may have perished and have been replaced. Brass, as we all know, is not one of the permanent metals, although many of these hinges and lock-plates were originally gilded, as a preservative against corrosion.

As English lacquer work varies from the fine to the exceedingly mediocre, it is advisable to defer purchasing until really good specimens can be acquired. Mere antiquity is no excuse for rubbish.

Bureau Bookcase in Cream Lacquer with Strong Dutch Influence.

Unfortunately the quality of lacquer depends very much on its condition, and to the collector, the modern work (shall we say the fake?) will often appeal, especially if he cannot tell the genuine from the spurious. Against frankly modern lacquer I have nothing to say, providing it be well done, fine in drawing and execution. The fake is in a different category altogether. To give a fictitious appearance of age the faker has to undermine the constitution of his work, to use the familiar phrase. He has to crack his varnishes, blister his grounds, and often wilfully maltreat his pieces to satisfy clients who will have everything old, or, to be polite, "antique." By such means he is shortening the effective life of his work very materially. One of the best tests, in the detection of faked lacquer or marqueterie, is to send the piece out to the Eastern States of America. A New York winter, followed by a summer, will settle the matter better than the greatest expert. It should be stated, however, that the same conditions will expose any restorations in the same way, even when honestly done, so the expert can be re-employed in postulating the distinction between "restoration" and "faking."

Bureau Cabinet in Buff Lacquer.
(C. H. F. Kinderman, Esq.)

Shortly after 1700, lacquer decoration becomes merely an alternative finish to veneering. That is where our friend the faker is so fortunately circumstanced. Knowing that it is possible to find original pieces—bureau bookcases, for example—similar in form, of which one has been veneered with walnut and another decorated

in lacquer, he takes perfectly genuine old cabinets which have lost their veneer in too many places to make it commercially possible to replace it, and he gives them a new lease of life as lacquered pieces. Fortunately for the expert, while many of these "restored" pieces are cleverly done, oil varnishes take a considerable time to get thoroughly hard, a matter of years rather than weeks, and the faker being in a hurry, uses spirit varnishes or even shellac polishes. With the average man this will pass; I know it is accepted as satisfactory in high legal circles, so there is nothing more to be said. After all, high authority is everything in these days.

Of this eighteenth-century lacquer it is useless to illustrate many examples. Pictorially, especially by monochrome processes, they merely duplicate the walnut or mahogany furniture of the same period. The corner cupboard shown here on page 249 is an exception by reason of its remarkable quality. I have never seen a finer specimen of black-and-gold lacquer, of English workmanship, than this piece. It has suffered somewhat from warping, but has been very little restored. English lacquer approaching the Oriental in quality is excessively rare, it is hardly necessary to say.

Bureau Cabinet in Dark Green Lacquer.

It is curious that lacquered cabinets of the best quality usually show strong Dutch influence. The cream lacquer bureau cabinet illustrated on page 251 is an example of this. The arching of the pediment, the ornamental hinging of the doors, the separate character of the bureau with its three small drawers

placed on the lower carcase with a large moulding between, and the fragment of the cut-out plinth which remains, all suggest the Netherlands rather than England. It must be remembered, as we saw in the case of marqueterie furniture, that this was a period when the arts of the two countries, England and Holland, were very closely associated, so much so, in fact, that it is often impossible to differentiate between the work of Holland and that of Dutch artisans settled in this country. Here, obviously, the clue which the choice of woods might afford, is absent.

The two bureau cabinets on pages 252 and 253 follow the prevailing

A Lacquered Triple-Top Games Table, Open. (*C. H. F. Kinderman, Esq.*)

fashions of their time, and require no detailed explanation here. Both date from the latter years of the reign of Anne.

The incidental character of much of this later lacquer is well

illustrated by the table and chair with which this chapter concludes. The first is a triple-top card table; perhaps it would be more correct to describe it as a combination of a games and writing table. It has the well-fashioned cabriole leg of the best period of Queen Anne, straight on the inside faces, as a good English cabriole leg should be. Tables of this kind, where a box is pushed downwards against the force of a spring, and flies upwards when a catch releases it, were known by

The Same Table with the Box Raised. Pieces of this kind were known as "Harlequin" Tables.

the name of "harlequin" in books and inventories of the time. The origin of the appellation can be easily surmised.

The last illustration here is a chair, of the usual type of the reign

of Anne, decorated with lacquer. It is one indication of the separate character of the trades of the cabinet-maker and the chair-maker—of which I shall have more to say at a later stage of this book—that while the fashion for lacquer became very general with furniture, it is very exceptional to find chairs decorated in this way. Chairs at this period were often made in sets of six or more. I have only seen one set of lacquered chairs in my life, and I had reason then to suspect that some of the set had been made up to match, at a later date.

A Chair of Queen Anne Period Decorated with Green Lacquer Work. One of a Set of Eighteen. (Agustin Edwards, Esq.)

In this instance, however, there is an original and magnificent set of eighteen, complete, of the one period, and apart from some necessary restoration, in wonderful condition. The ground is a somewhat dull green, with a raised, gilded gesso decoration. It is curious that such an exceptional set should be found in the heart of fashionable London, although on what is, technically, Chilean territory.

English furniture bristles with problems. It is not only what the collector observes that puzzles him; if he be an acute observer, it is often the absence of a certain type—what he does not see, in short—which is the greatest conundrum of all. We shall notice some more puzzles at a later stage, and some which appear to defy solution.

CHAPTER XIII

WALNUT CHAIRS OF 1660–1700

THE popularity of walnut, in place of the oak which was the national furniture timber of England for so many centuries, dates from the early Restoration years. The wood is used for chairs as early as 1660–65, but in furniture, especially those pieces where the scantling is large, or where it is employed in the form of veneers, it is rare before about 1690–95. Small tables, generally with spiral-turned legs and with veneered tops, are to be found which date, apparently, from the early years of the reign of Charles II., but the solid wood is never of any size, and the veneers have the appearance of being foreign, of Dutch or Flemish origin.

Apart from the fact that after 1660 there are many evidences to show that chair-making became a distinct trade from that of the joiner—to which further reference will be made at a later stage—there are other reasons why walnut was adopted for chairs and small tables long before it was used for larger pieces. A brief investigation into the history and properties of the timber itself may yield some information on this point. Walnut is one of several fine trees of the natural order Juglandaceæ. The so-called English walnut, *Juglans regia*, is a native of Persia and the Himalayas. Some botanists aver that it was introduced into England by the Earl of Pembroke, in the sixteenth century, and first planted at Wilton Park; others state that it was known in this country as early as the Roman occupation. It is certain that much of the walnut used for chairs in the early Restoration years was immature timber, almost of sapling growth, and from this we might infer that walnut-trees had not reached maturity, in England,

as late as 1660. There may be other reasons, however, why this sapling wood was used. The walnut is, primarily, a fruit-tree, and would be maintained principally for its nut-bearing properties, and for certain medicinal virtues — among others the treatment of scrofula —which its leaves were supposed to possess. Such trees would only become valuable for timber after the nut-bearing stage had passed. Before the timber could be used, there was the felling of the tree, the sawing into boards, and the problem of seasoning, all to be reckoned with, and this trouble taken to replace a wood such as oak, the properties of which were known and had been tested for generations, by one which was utterly unknown. In addition, the walnut must have been a rare tree, when compared with the oak; it is so even at the present day, although it was planted extensively during the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, and again after the Napoleonic wars.

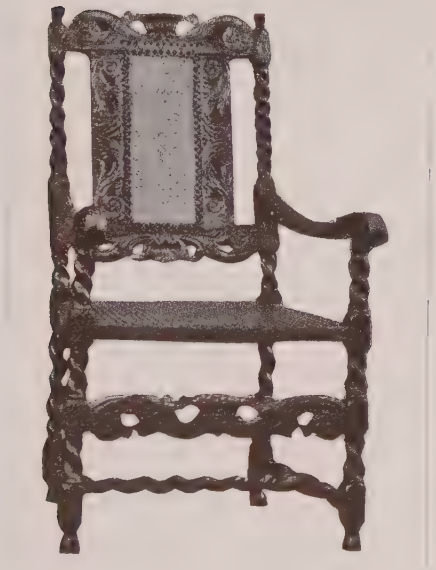
Oak Chair. The Cromwellian Type with Hide Seat and Back, c. 1650.

Fruit woods, apple, pear, almond, plum, damson, and others such as laburnum, quince, and holly, appear to have been used at all periods, in small pieces, for inlay or for bosses or split-balusters. The "strap-and-jewel" work of the late Tudor and early Stuart periods is nearly always fashioned from one or another of these fruit woods. The trees possessing a use-value, for their produce, would, as a general rule, be cut down after their bearing stage had passed, and some would

never grow to any size even if allowed to remain. The use of the so-called "oyster-piece"—a transverse section of the trunk or bough—demonstrated that these saplings were cut and in common use, as no one would take a section from a trunk, of a foot or more in diameter, for this purpose.

The chair-maker, using wood in small pieces, and relying upon the turning lathe as one of his principal tools, could use these saplings, which would be valueless to the joiner other than as inlay-pieces or for transverse-cutting into small veneers.

Walnut Armchair. Early Restoration Type without Piercing, c. 1660.



Walnut Armchair. Type of c. 1665–70.

While walnut has not the durable properties of oak nor anything like its tough character, it is milder and closer in grain and would be more favoured by the wood-turner. Its chief drawback, its liability to the ravages of worm, would not be apprehended at the period when it was first used. Being close in grain, it could be easily varnished or, with the aid of beeswax, would take a good friction polish.

To judge of its apparent superiority we must not compare seventeenth-century walnut with oak of similar period *as we find them to-day*. To appreciate the difference which existed at the period when they were made, we must compare new walnut with new oak furniture, both finished without any attempt at what is known as an "antique finish." There is little doubt that, superficially, walnut triumphed over oak and remained the popular

Walnut Armchair. The Fine Restoration Type of c. 1660.

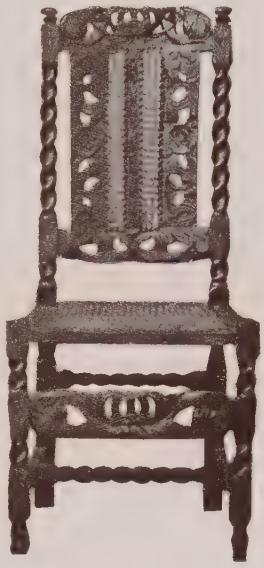
Walnut Armchair. Rare Type with Oval Back Panel, c. 1665.

wood until its defects were discovered with time, and its place was taken by mahogany.

The change in the form and methods of construction of the English chair, which is so marked after the Restoration, really begins during the Commonwealth. The Puritan appears as an extraordinary blot on the English historical landscape, paralleled only, perhaps, by some "particular" people, in later days, who can find no better

purpose in this world than to revile everything contained in it. There is little enough excuse for the iconoclasm of the hirelings of Henry VIII., Edward VI., or Elizabeth, at whose hands so much of the fine work of the fifteenth century was despoiled, but they may have alleged public policy as an excuse, albeit a very poor one. The Puritan had no such defence. The particular vandal who was found in Canterbury Cathedral

Walnut Chair. The Crown is Introduced into Cresting and Stretcher, c. 1665



Walnut Chair. The Crude Restoration Type of c. 1670.

on a ladder, busily engaged in breaking up the priceless glass in some of the thirteenth-century windows, explained that he was doing the Lord's work, and received a brick at his head as a reply from an angry onlooker, but escaped having his brains dashed out, perhaps for another reason as well as the one that the said onlooker missed his aim.

The Puritan chair was usually severe and simple, like the Roundhead himself, yet logically constructed, well-braced with

Walnut Armchair. An Early Appearance of the Braganza Foot, c. 1665.

orderliness of design which render them well worthy of the attention of our collector.

The true Restoration chair, of which a good many examples are shown here, belongs essentially to the walnut period, and when of high quality, is nearly always made in that wood. Oak is not uncommon, and I have found these chairs in elm, ash, and even yew, sometimes several woods being used together in the same chair. The chair of good quality is unmistakable, the quality of stretcher and cross railing, with legs and balusters simply turned, often with the bobbin or reel turning which we have already seen in tables of this period. The usual seat and back panel was a tightly stretched stout cowhide, secured by large round-headed nails. The one on page 258 may be taken as the type of a period which is not without interest as far as the development of English furniture is concerned. Chairs of this kind have a sturdiness of construction and a precise

Walnut Armchair with Flemish Motives in the Back Framing and Front Stretcher, c. 1670.

the carving being superb, vigorous gouge-cutting executed with precision, highly finished, yet with no tentative aid from the rasp or file. The framing or splats which enclose the panel of cane in the back are nearly always pierced right through, in the best examples. Beyond the substitution of this caning for leather, and the lavish use of carving, these early Restoration chairs follow those of the Commonwealth in constructive principles. Take the two armchairs on page 259 as examples. The back is a complete panel in each case (to which the criss-crossed caning lends an additional strength), properly secured with tenons and pegs between the back legs. Below the seat-rail is the further addition of one or two stretcher-rails. In armchairs, by the necessary prolongation of the front legs above the seat-rail to act as arm-balusters, the seat-frame is properly housed at all four corners, and in chairs without arms, as on the top illustration on page 261, the front leg-squares are allowed to project above the seat, rounded off in the form of buttons, by the wood-turner. Both back and front legs are spiral-turned in these early Restoration chairs, with squares left for the mortising of the seat, front stretcher and cross rails. These pierced and carved stretcher-rails are characteristic of the early Charles II.

Walnut Day-Bed. Twisted Railings between Legs on Both Sides, c. 1660.

chairs. They follow, as a general rule, the cresting-rail of the chair-back in design, and the opportunity which they offered, both by their

size and position, for the display of skill in design and execution on the part of the wood-carver, was taken full advantage of. Thus we find the front stretcher used on chairs, long after the vogue for this Restoration pattern had departed—that is, considering the kaleidoscopic rapidity with which one fashion succeeded another in the forty years from the time when Charles II. came over from Holland, to ascend the English throne, until the end of the seventeenth century.

That Charles did not forget the Dutch friends of his exile can be imagined, although the race of Stuarts possessed rather a keener sense of favours to come than of those which had gone before. Whether by direct invitation, or in the hope of royal patronage, Charles was not many years on his English throne before a numerous body of workmen from the Low Countries settled here, in Norfolk, Suffolk, Essex, and Kent, bringing with them, among other things, the art of the marqueterie cutter, and possibly of the lacquer-worker as well. From about 1670, until the accession of Anne, we get a number of

Walnut Day-Bed, with Pierced and Carved Stretcher on one side only; c. 1660.

foreign influences in English furniture, which complicate its development to such an extent, that it is impossible to illustrate, in anything

like a complete way, the diversity of manners during these years, in a book of this size. Thus we find the whorled Portuguese foot, as on the upper illustration on page 262, which, with other details, was introduced by craftsmen who followed the Princess Catherine to these shores. From Flanders comes the double-ended or S-scroll, as on the stretcher of the lower chair on the same page. A later variation of the same device is the breaking up of the flowing line of this curve

Walnut Armchair. Covered in Needlework; c. 1670.

Walnut Armchair. The Upholstered Type of c. 1670.

into a device similar to a double C laid flat. The three chairs on page 268 all have this C-scrolling used wherever possible in the design. The seats here are no longer tenoned between the projecting squares of the front legs, but are now merely spiked on them, a departure from the earlier sound construction of the first Restoration years which is regrettable.

An innovation of the Restoration years is the day-bed or couch, where the chair-seat is prolonged and supported on six legs instead of four.

As a rule, these day-beds were intended to be placed against a wall, the usual pierced stretcher on the front of the chairs being here on the side, but on one side only, as on pages 264 and 266. Where the spiral-turned rails replaced these pierced stretchers, they were fixed on back and front, as on page 263, so that the day-bed was alike on both sides. These pieces, although decorative in appearance, had certain defects inherent to their design and construction. The sloping back was fragile, owing to the strain being thrown on the cross-grain of the wood of the sloping uprights, or prolongation of the back legs. The usual plan, which further intensified this weakness, was to make the back adjustable, as on this page, the back-frame being pivoted in the lower squares of the uprights, and secured at varying angles by the cords shown here.

The chair with upholstered seat and back also begins to develop during these years, dictated less, perhaps, by considerations of comfort, as the desire to display such fabrics as velvets, damasks, and petit-

Walnut Day-Bed. Later Restoration Type, with Adjustable Head Panel, c. 1680.

point needlework. Velvets and silks were beginning to be imported from France and Flanders extensively at this period, but they do not

become as general as after the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes in 1685, an act of oppression on the part of the French king which had the effect of exiling thousands of French weavers, who fled to this country from such persecutions as the massacre of St. Bartholomew, and settled here, principally in the Spitalfields quarter, bringing with them their weaving arts, which were lavishly fostered by the wealthy classes of England. From 1685 to 1700 may be described as the era of gorgeous fabrics.

Walnut Armchair. The Elaborate Restoration Type of c. 1680.

Walnut Armchair. The Restoration Type of Back with the Flemish Curve on Arms, Balusters, Front Legs, and Stretcher, c. 1680.

Needlework, in its many phases, was an English art for over a century, but had been rarely devoted to the production of coverings for chairs or settees before the Restoration. In cross, tent, congress or Burgundian stitch, or in the raised designs (generally of Scriptural subjects) known as stump-work, the usual endeavour was to produce panels

or pictures intended to be framed and hung upon the wall; occasionally a small piece of glass (which was a costly article at this date) was provided, with a broad frame embellished with this stump-work. In these frames, and the small caskets of the period, the pattern was often worked in coloured beads.

During the short reign of James II. a number of foreign influences intruded into the designing of English furniture, especially of chairs, which, being the production of a separate, and more progressive,

Walnut Chairs Showing the Later Development from the Earlier Restoration Chairs. The Backs are Taller, the Seats Narrower, and are Spiked to the Front Legs instead of being Tenoned between them. The Flemish Curve and Double-C scroll is used everywhere; c. 1680.

trade, readily adopted any novelty. It is impossible, in the space at command here, to illustrate all the types which followed one another at this period in almost bewildering variety, but some reference is necessary, however brief, as these fashions do not come and go, but remain to affect the later designs very materially. Thus we have the Spanish bow or curve, shown in the back and stretcher of the walnut chair on page 270. In the next example this bow is amalgamated with the Flemish double-C scroll and the Portuguese whorled foot. Another feature, also from Portugal, is the use of the bulb instead of the former square to contain the stretcher-railing, as on page 271. The back is now composed of one complete frame instead of a separate panel tenoned between balusters, with a cresting either fixed between the squares or dowelled on top (see page 273). The earlier shaped, pierced, and carved stretcher between the front legs is now supplemented by a cross-rail fixed between those which unite the front and back legs, as on page 272. After 1689 the shaped

Walnut Day-Bed with Flemish C*-Scrolled Legs, c.* 1685.

lateral stretcher, something like the form of the letter X, is introduced from the Low Countries, and the well-known chair from Hampton

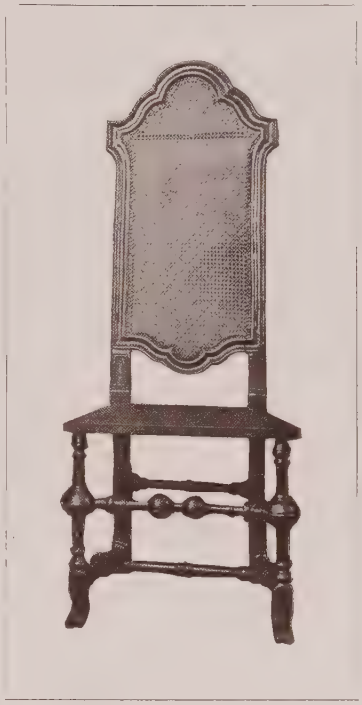
Walnut Chair with the Spanish Curve in Stretcher and Back, c. 1685. (*The Author.*)

Country channels. Chairs of this type are well worthy of the attention of the discriminating collector, as not only are they exceedingly decorative and well designed, but they are also interesting in their variety, and the number of different influences, from many sources, which they exhibit.

Court, shown here on page 274, has this flat stretcher combined with the Portuguese bulb-turning and whorled foot. This bulb is afterwards modified in various ways, culminating, at length, in the inverted cup which is so typical of the period of William and Mary. The chair on page 273 is interesting, as the ornate pierced and carved back shows the influence of the later French Renaissance transmuted through Low

Walnut Armchair with Strong Flemish Influence, c. 1685. (*C. H. F. Kinderman, Esq.*)

The cabriole leg, in its fully developed form, is peculiar to the eighteenth century, although we find tentative attempts in the years from 1690 to 1700. A description of the method of making a leg of this kind may be of some assistance, in appreciating the difficulties which had to be encountered at the outset. That the older models of Holland were copied is unquestionable. The two chairs on page 275 are Dutch in design if not in origin, and the clean smooth character of the English cabriole, which renders it so effective, is here frittered away by needless embellishment of the carver or the turner. There was also the idea, always present, that a chair on four legs demanded the strengthening aid of the cross-stretcher.



Walnut Chair with Portuguese Bulb-Turned Legs, c. 1685–90.

In the making of a smooth cabriole leg the shape is first drawn out and cut from a thin board. This is known as a templete. The design is, necessarily, in profile, but it will be seen later that this cannot be the exact shape which the leg will afterwards assume. A block of wood of sufficient thickness is taken, and cut on front and back to the marked lines. The pieces which fall from the saw are retained and used as "saddles" to permit of the piece being laid flat for cutting the other way. This second cutting, when completed, produces a square-sectioned cabriole, as on the chair on page 276. The first idea was to turn this leg over to the carver for embellishment, leaving it in its square form, with its profile unaltered. The next stage was to make a square collar about half-way down the leg, rounding the shaft below until it terminated in a club-foot, as on page 277. The chief difficulty in rounding the entire leg, from immediately below the knee, was that the outer edge

had to be removed with the chisel or spoke-shave, thereby destroying the profile. The result, therefore, had to be determined by the eye of the workman, as there was no method of regulating this by a templete. Where two legs had to correspond exactly, for obvious reasons of symmetry, this absence of any means of producing such duplication, by mechanical means, was a rather serious matter, as a bad workman would spoil one leg after another. At a later stage it was found possible to produce from a successful model a reverse, or "female," templete, which could be used as a guide, but this was an idea which would not be self-evident, and while the square-sectioned cabriole was accepted, there would be no valid reason to adventure in this way. The rounded cabriole, however, once accomplished successfully, the natural pride in workmanship, which is so evident in much of the work of this period, would be sufficient inducement to produce it again, and to establish a fashion for it. That the smooth cabriole was regarded as a triumph, in the first years of the eighteenth century, is shown by the fact that the maker of chairs and tables dispensed with the aid of the wood-carver, whose assistance had been so invaluable at many stages in the development of English furniture, as we have seen in these pages. It is only at a later date, and with the desire for some-

Walnut Armchair Covered in Needlework, c. 1690. (*Messrs. Gill and Reigate.*)

thing novel, that the cabriole leg begins to be carved. The smooth, graceful cabriole is typical of English craftsmanship at its best. Those who have an eye for sheer beauty of line will appreciate the studiously restrained character of this English smooth cabriole, such as will be illustrated in a later chapter, with the inside profile almost straight, without the excessive curvature which the Dutch (who were the teachers of the English makers) never appeared to be capable of avoiding, and which gave such a flamboyant and unsightly character to much of their work in this field.

Walnut Armchair with French Back and Dutch Serpentine Stretcher, c. 1690. (*C. H. F. Kinderman, Esq.*)

These ornate chairs of the Orange period are rare and valuable pieces at the present day, although in sheer perfection of design they do not compare with much of the later Queen Anne work. To the trained craftsman, they appear as 'prentice efforts, work in a novel style not properly comprehended. There is fine workmanship, and no lack of elaborate carving, in these pieces, as a rule, and there is nothing that is amateurish in their execution. Perhaps at no time, in the entire history of furniture, did carving attain such a high standard of quality as in many of these chairs, such as on this page, for example; yet there is the idea that he who designed this chair had no clear and finished conception in his mind, but hoped to atone for a lack of cohesion of parts by a super-elaboration of detail. In the chair from Hampton Court, on

this page, there is the lack of definite unity between the chair and its legs, and the undulating stretcher is not a fortunate conception, as a comparison between this and the previous chair will show. How much of this is due to direct Dutch influence, it is difficult to say; there is a very narrow line of demarcation between English and Dutch work at this period.

English woodworking (and the same may be true of other crafts) possesses certain definite evolutionary peculiarities which are seldom found in the creative arts, painting, music, or literature. One is the rapid growth, from the birth of a new style, until a certain stage of perfection is attained, and then the decline, or rather, depravity, which always supervenes. Directly a new manner became fashionable, the first efforts appeared to have been to produce the most exaggerated versions, where elaboration of detail was used to hide imperfections of the basic idea. The next stage is where the style becomes rationalised, where frequent experiments have corrected initial faults, yet nothing has yet become mannered by repeated duplication. The third stage, and the one which persists for the longest space of time, as a general rule, is where the one pattern has been repeated so often, that a convention has been established, and all spontaneity has been lost and all the earlier fine details depraved. This peculiar law, in its operation, may be noted on the illustrations

Walnut Armchair. Portuguese Bulb-Turned Legs, Dutch Flat Serpentine Stretcher; c. 1690. (*Hampton Court Palace.*)

Walnut Chair, probably Dutch; c. 1690.

cabriole, yet this chair is at the zenith of its particular fashion.

Those who prize rarity, at the expense of other qualities, may console themselves for the lack of the later perfection, by the exceptional character of these chairs at the closing years of the seventeenth century. They are, unquestionably, much rarer than those of the Queen Anne or early Georgian period. To the student of English furniture they possess an additional interest, in illustrating the evolutionary stages through which the chair had to throughout this book. Thus these Orange chairs are in the first stage, the last phase of which can be remarked in the two Dutch chairs on this page, and in the wing chair on page 276. The emergence from this chrysalis stage (if the expression may be permitted) is just beginning, in the example on page 277. The greater technical excellence of the chair-maker of the early years of Anne would have produced something better than the front legs here, the immature

Walnut Chair, probably Dutch; c. 1690.

pass before the perfect models of the early eighteenth century were evolved. When in their original coverings, of Spitalfields damask, brocatelle, cut-pile or figured velvet, or, best of all, of fine stitch needlework, they are, indeed, possessions to be envied. It is one

Walnut Easy Chair, with the Square-Sectioned Cabriole Leg of 1690: 4 *ft.* 2 *in. High ;* 2 *ft.* 2 *in. across Seat ;* 1 *ft.* 9 *in. Depth of Seat Outside.*
(*Madame A de Gandarillas.*)

of the strongest arguments against chairs in pairs, or in sets, which I know, that the collector loses in interest, by affording the necessary floor-space to repetitions of the one pattern, which might be devoted, to better advantage, to a number of models, which may harmonise even although they differ, considerably, yet illustrate at the same time the varying stages through which

Walnut Easy Chair, with the Embryonic Cabriole Leg of 1690–95: 4 *ft.* ¾ *in. High;* 2 *ft.* 3 *in. across Seat;* 2 *ft.* 8 *in. Outside Arms.*
(*Capt. N. R. Colville, M.C.*)

the English chair has passed in its development. There is no greater charm, to my mind, in the hobby of collecting, than the search, pursuit, and discovery of "bridge-pieces," the constant endeavour to complete an evolutionary chain, yet with the knowledge that, however perfect such chain may be, apparently, there are always other links which may be found, the existence of which has been hardly suspected. This gives to the collecting of English furniture a definite purpose, with the added charm of the unexpected always present. Our perfect Old-World House should have no duplicates, yet be furnished on as ordered a plan as space consideration will permit. Here the furniture collector is more fortunately circumstanced than the bibliophile. The latter *knows* the links which are missing, and has the added chagrin of being fully aware that many of these he can never hope to acquire, no matter how royal (perhaps in these days, one should say, large) his purse may be. *His* missing volumes must be extremely rare, or he would have possessed them, long since. With the collector of English chairs, for example (to be an evolutionary collector, the field cannot be a wide one, hence the implied limitation here), if he be wise, the secret of how much he desires to possess a certain model, to complete his series, will remain a guarded secret, let us hope, until *after* he has made his purchase. I have known of two collectors, only, in a certain field of works of art being sufficient to establish a boom; sometimes one is enough, if his wants be advertised sufficiently among "the trade." In the phraseology of the dealer, "Of such is the Kingdom of Heaven."

CHAPTER XIV

PLAIN WALNUT FURNITURE OF THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY

THERE are many to whom marqueterie or lacquered furniture makes little or no appeal. Polychromatic inlay is apt to become assertive in rooms of small size, and here, also, lacquered pieces can only be used very sparingly. It is comparatively easy (it is only a question of the heavy purse) to acquire notable examples of English furniture; it is always something of a problem to arrange them in the Old-World House in such manner that each falls into its proper place, naturally, as a part in a harmonious scheme. Our house being modest in scale, with low rooms not of great size (happy is he who possesses a long, low room, some thirty feet by only eight or nine in height, deal wainscotted, and with one or two roomy Georgian bay windows to break up the expanse), it is as well to recognise, at the outset, the futility of trying to arrange pieces which were intended for large and lofty rooms. To set out to buy exactly the thing required is not always economical policy; the one with a volume deficient in a library set cannot expect (unless he have the greatest possible luck) to buy the missing book cheaply, when found by a happy chance. It is always advisable—in fact, it is imperative—that any piece of furniture should be bought with a definite position in the mind's eye, and one should feel assured that it will look well in its place and not clash with the general scheme, but it is as well to keep an open mind as to the exact description of such article. It is one of the charms of antique furniture, compared with modern work, that one so often encounters the utterly unexpected, the piece

which conforms to no preconceived notion. The ideas briefly referred to in Chapter V., reinforced with some experience and an intelligent use of the imagination, will prevent the purchasing of such pieces as Tudor writing tables, for instance, which a little thought will show cannot exist as genuine examples. It is hardly necessary to belabour this point further.

Contemporary with the marqueterie and lacquered furniture of the later seventeenth century, as described and illustrated in Chapters XI. and XII., are the refined walnut pieces which were made very sparingly, probably for those of quieter taste or more modest means. Simple inlay, of stringing or stars in boxwood or holly, was often employed, but as a rule the decorative effect was achieved by the use of walnut of fine figure, either in plain sheets of veneer, or

Walnut Table: 3 ft. 1½ in. Wide; 2 ft. 1½ in. Deep; 2 ft. 4½ in. High; c. 1690. (*Victoria and Albert Museum.*)

cross-banded. Occasionally the sapling "oyster-pieces" of walnut, laburnum, or lignum were substituted for the plain walnut.

Perhaps the most desirable examples of this period are the small tables and square cabinets on spiral-turned legs or stands similar to those shown here. That these are merely the simple versions of the marqueterie pieces, probably made as cheaper alternatives, is more than probable, but depending, as they are compelled to do, on grace of proportion, line, and detail for their appeal, the present-day collector of discriminating taste often prefers them to the more elaborate specimens.

The lavish use of spiral turning in these tables and cabinets may excuse a somewhat necessary digression in order to explain the

Walnut Table, with Double Open-Twist Legs: 3 ft. 2⅜ in. Wide; 2 ft. ¾ in. Deep; 2 ft. 5½ in. High; c. 1690. (*Victoria and Albert Museum.*)

principle of the slide-rest, that adjunct to the turner's lathe which is used in the fashioning of these twist-turned legs. A simple illustra-

Walnut Table in the Saloon at Lyme Park, c. 1695. (*Capt. The Hon. Richard Legh.*)

tion will serve to show the idea. Take a round piece of wood, similar to a desk ruler, and suspend it between centres so that it can be revolved easily. The chucks of an ordinary turning lathe will be the best. While the ruler is revolving slowly, place the point of a

Walnut Cabinet in the Saloon at Lyme Park, c. 1690.
(*Capt. The Hon. Richard Legh.*)

lead pencil against it at one spot. The result will be a ring, marked by the lead. Now, instead of allowing the pencil to remain stationary,

move it slowly from left to right. We will now get a line spiralled round the ruler, the close twisting of which will depend upon the

Walnut Cabinet, c. 1695.

rate at which the lead is moved, or its equivalent, the rapidity of revolution of the round piece of wood in the lathe. Now substitute

for the pencil, which merely marks, a tool which cuts, and we will begin to obtain a spiral turning, the degree of subsequent finishing depending largely on the shape of the cutting tool, whether of chisel or gouge-form. With the slide-rest, the cutter is at the back, and the revolution of the turning and the rate of the slide can be accurately adjusted to the desired proportions by gearing.

There are many varieties in spiralling possible with the slide-rest. There is the single-bine twist as on page 280, either parallel or tapered; the double twist where the effect is similar to two rods plaited together; the double-open twist (see page 281) where the wood is cut away between the plaits; the triple-open twist; the fluted or "barley-sugar" twist, where the spiralling is sharp-edged; and other

The Cabinet on Page 284 Shown Open.

varieties known as "point," "fiddle-head," "latchee," and another kind, which will be seen in the examples of tripod furniture in the

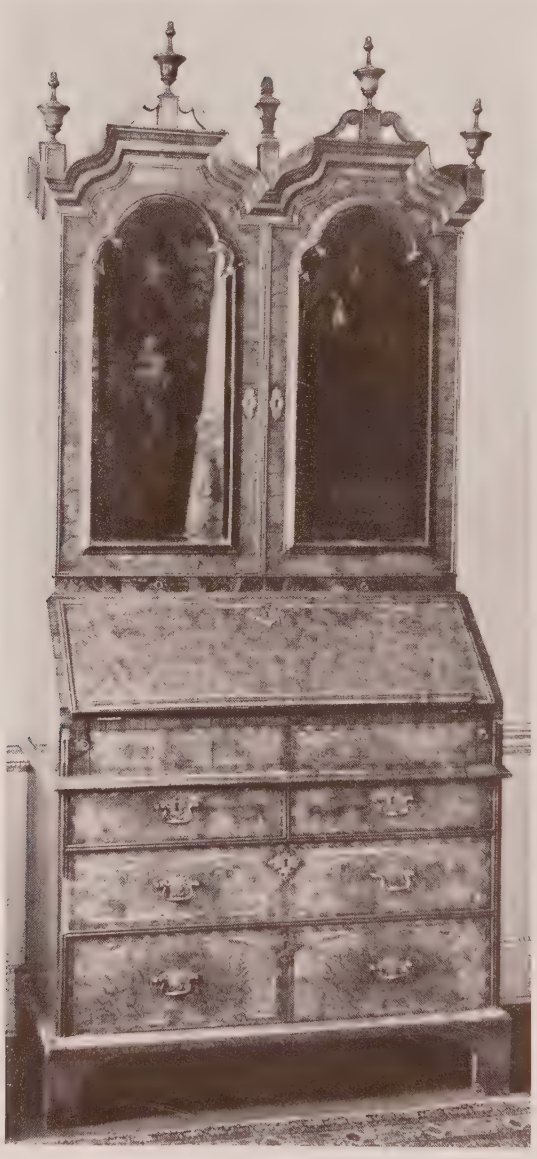
Walnut Chest of Drawers on Stand : 4 ft. 2½ in. Total Height ; 2 ft. 6 in. Height of Chest ; 3 ft. Wide ; 1 ft. 7¼ in. Deep ; c. 1690. *(Messrs. Herbert Gould and Lucas.)*

next volume, where the flutes in a tapered shaft, instead of being straight up and down, are spiralled round. The last is lathe-work peculiar to the eighteenth century.

The three tables, on twisted legs, shown here require no detailed reference. The one on page 281 exhibits strong Dutch or Teutonic influence, the foreign character being further emphasised by the star-inlay of the top. The example from Lyme Park on page 282 shows the clever use which was made of the cross-cut saplings, here bordered and panelled with broad bandings of light-coloured laburnum.

Walnut Card Table: 2 ft. 3 in. High; 2 ft. 8½ in. Wide; 2 ft. 5 in. Deep when Open; c. 1695. (*Victoria and Albert Museum.*)

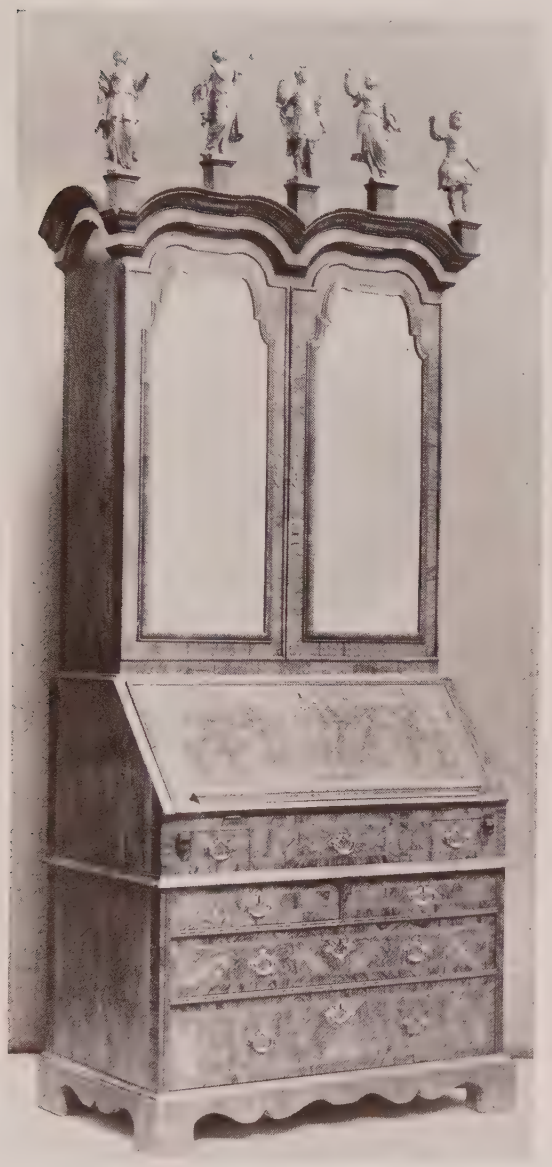
The resemblance between many of the pieces of this period is so close as to suggest a common origin, not only of locality, but even of



Walnut Bureau Cabinet, c. 1695.
(*C. H. F. Kinderman, Esq.*)

workshop. Thus, in the square cabinet from Lyme Park, illustrated here on page 283, the details of the legs, stretchers, and even the brass drop-handles are identical to those of the table on page 280. Between the table on page 282, and the cabinet, shown open and closed, on pages 284 and 285, there is a similarity but nothing more. The twist-turned legs are alike only on a superficial examination.

To those for whom individuality has an appeal, this plain walnut furniture of the seventeenth century is to be recommended. The method of cutting marqueterie in layers of from four to six veneers, necessarily involved duplication, if a considerable expenditure of labour and material was not to be wasted. With this plain walnut there was no such incentive, and we find pieces which, while possessing little

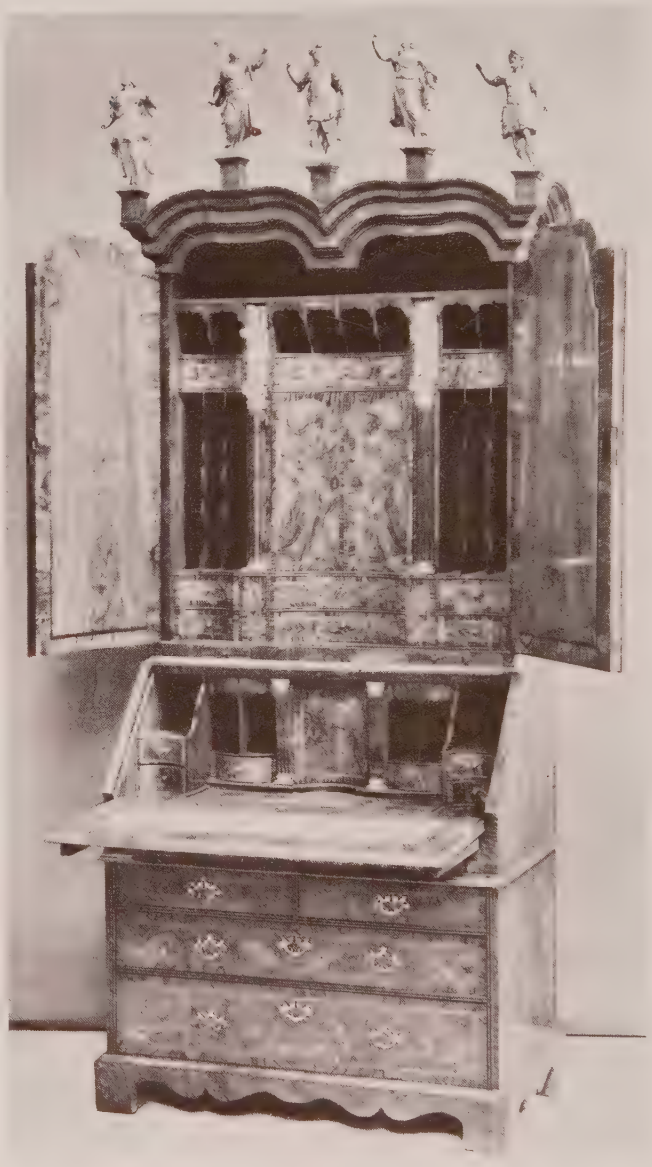


Walnut Bureau Cabinet: 3 ft. 3 in. Wide; 1 ft. 10¾ in. Deep Over All; Lower Carcase, 3 ft. 6¾ in. High; Upper Carcase, 4 ft. High to Top of Base of Central Figure; c. 1695. (Capt. N. R. Colville, M.C.)

elaboration, are quietly studied in their effect. The art of the wood-turner, which had reached a high stage of mechanical perfection in the early Restoration years, was now reinforced by considerable taste. The turning of the stand of the chest illustrated on page 286 is no mere vague repetition of a pattern used again and again. There is a spontaneity in the fashioning of the legs which a craftsman's eye will appreciate. The drawer-fronts are veneered from the same leaf, with the continuity of the veining lines preserved. The marqueterie cutter has lent his aid in the making of the simple but effective banding to each drawer. For the constructional parts, both oak and elm have been used. In its restraint, and perfection of detail, this is one of the really desirable pieces for the Old-World House, with its low rooms; in a

large apartment its quiet beauty would be lost. The same may be said of the small card table shown on page 287, where the simple turned legs finish with the hoof which was a favourite device at this period. Three small card drawers are provided in the frieze.

The elaborate walnut furniture of the last decade of the seventeenth century nearly always exhibits a marked Dutch character. There is little doubt that much of it was directly inspired from Holland, probably the work of Dutch artisans who settled in considerable numbers in the



The Cabinet on Page 289, with Upper Doors and Bureau Open.

East Anglian counties. Two notable examples are given on pages 288 to 291. The accurate mitring together of shaped and straight

The Upper Part of the Cabinet on Page 290, *with Central Door Open.*

mouldings, as on these two cabinets and the wardrobe which concludes the illustrations to this chapter, demanded considerable skill, as with the straight-cut mitre, the corresponding moulding-members of each section will not intersect properly. The mitre, therefore, has to be shaped in a flattened sweep, and this curvature can only be ascertained by setting out the design on paper, prolonging each member to its intersecting point, and then joining them up with a shaped

Walnut Wardrobe: 4 *ft.* 8 *in. Wide;* 7 *ft.* $\frac{3}{4}$ *in. High;* 1 *ft.* $8\frac{3}{4}$ *in. Deep;* *c.* 1695. (*Capt. N. R. Colville, M.C.*)

line, taking a careful templete in each case for the workman's guidance.

A characteristic feature of these cabinets was the elaborate fitting of the interiors. In the one on page 290, where the Dutch influence is exceptionally strong, the cornice is surmounted by five carved and gilt figures, executed with great precision and skill. The veneers of this cabinet are of the fine golden shade which much of this English walnut possesses when the original varnish has not been tampered with. It is this bleaching, by the gentle action of light, which the forger attempts to reproduce by the agency of acids and caustics, and in which endeavour he fails so signally. That this golden walnut has appreciated so greatly in value, during recent years, is a tribute to the growth of taste among collectors, in the same space of time. Designed with unerring taste, and made with unfailing skill, this walnut furniture of the last years of the seventeenth and early part of the eighteenth centuries is a possession which the collector may well be proud to possess, and the modern craftsman to imitate.

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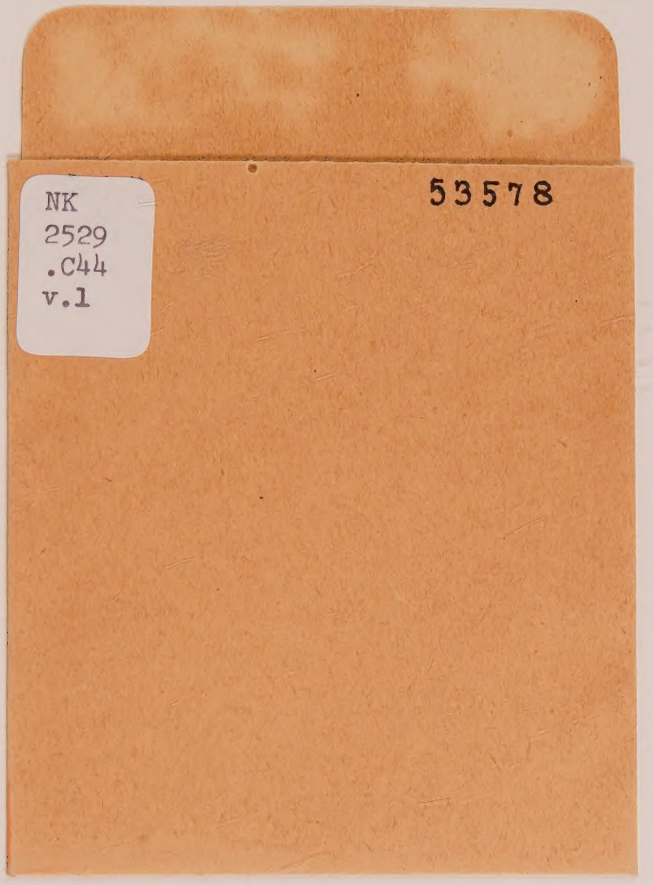

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